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Creation and the Cosmic System: Al-Ghazâlî & Avicenna

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For Abuna Anawati

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1. Introduction

The present study has its origin in a paper entitled "Al-Ghazâlî's Use of Avicenna's Philosophy" prepared for the Penn-Paris-Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium held at Morigny in November 1986 on the topic "inheritance and borrowing in the middle ages", publication of the proceedings of which have been unfortunately delayed. It was not possible at the time and in the framework offered by the colloquium to deal adequately with the many problems posed by the texts and I therefore restricted my contribution to a brief outline of the basic orientation of al-Ghazâlî's teaching and to pointing to some of the more serious questions raised by his apparent departures from the doctrine of earlier, Ash'arite theology and several of the principal difficulties which one encounters in trying to ascertain the exact sense and implication of what he says regarding a few fundamental issues. I hope here to have brought some of the primary difficulties to a satisfactory resolution and to have uncovered a core of theological doctrines that run consistently, albeit often obliquely, through the corpus of al-Ghazâlî's work.

Al-Ghazâlî is commonly recognized as the one who made the first great adaptation of the intellectual heritage of Greek philosophical thought to the elaboration of sunnî theology. The aspects of this which involve the basic theological questions have been submitted to less thorough study than have some philosophical aspects of his teaching. With some scholars there has been a tendency to feel that because of the introduction of elements of classical philosophy al-Ghazâlî's thought is more truly theoretical and therefore, in some sense, more genuinely theological than was that of his Ash'arite predecessors. Such judgements concerning the relation of al-Ghazâlî's theology to that of classical *kalâm* and of their respective characteristics have for the most part, however, been based on a somewhat superficial examination both of al-Ghazâlî's work and that of his predecessors and to such an extent are inadequately substantiated. It is true enough that on reading a list of the primary dogmas of Islam as presented by any of the great Ash'arite masters, for example the twenty six theses presented by abû Isḥâq al-Isfarâ'înî at the beginning of his *'aqîda*, one finds none that al-Ghazâlî will not affirm as formulated and that to this extent he remains formally within the confines of traditional Ash'arite orthodoxy. That his conception of a number of the basic theses and his analysis of them differs from those of his predecessors is a commonplace. Viewed on a superficial level, this may appear to be no more than the natural result of his adoption of the general framework and of various major elements of the Neoplatonised Aristotelianism which was current in a number of contemporary intellectual and religious milieux. Again, it is clear that al-Ghazâlî's reconception and reformulation of some theses introduced no change into the way they had previously been understood that was of fundamental theological importance. With others, however, this is not apparently the case, but the diversity of his work and the ambivalence with which he frequently expresses himself render it difficult to come to a clear judgement on the matter. In order to determine the real theological significance of al-Ghazâlî's departures from traditional

Ash'arism one has to undertake a detailed analysis of what he has to say on the most basic theological issues. It is in order to shed light on his teaching concerning some of these questions that the present topic was selected.

In focusing on the relationship between Avicenna and al-Ghazâlî I do not mean to suggest here that Avicenna is the only philosopher whose work exerted influence on al-Ghazâlî's thought and his theology, but to begin from the obvious fact that he had a profound effect on al-Ghazâlî's thinking and to take some account of al-Ghazâlî's manifest preoccupation with his work.[1] It is important to keep in mind in this context that there is a significant religious dimension to the philosophical vision of Avicenna. One of his primary efforts was to complete the integration of the Islamic phenomenon into the general framework of the inherited philosophical tradition that was begun by al-Fârâbî and in some respects – for as a philosopher he was a more independent and original mind than were his Muslim predecessors – to rethink and reform the philosophical tradition within the cultural universe of Islam. The theology of al-Ghazâlî, for its part, manifests a far greater quest for a strictly intellectual vision of the universe to complement basic religious belief, intuition, and understanding, than had that of earlier *kalâm*, particularly that of the Ash'arites. That is to say, the purely intellectual and theoretical understanding of the universe and of God's action in it is far more important in the works of al-Ghazâlî as a framework for achieving and understanding basic religious doctrine than in those of prior Ash'arites. His much talked of sufism is subordinated to this intellectual vision, as is immediately apparent in a comparison of *Mishkâh* with the works of almost any genuine sufi master of the period as it is also in a careful reading of *Ihyâ'*.

Our present inquiry takes as its point of departure a number of statements that are made in *al-Maqsad al-asnâ*.[2] This was chosen because it is essentially a work of theoretical or systematic theology and one in which, because he is not formally bound to the conventions of the traditional manuals, as he is, for example, in *Iqtisâd*, he tends to

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[1] It is clear that in some of the elements of al-Ghazâlî's theology that we shall discuss he follows and elaborates material that was found already in al-Juwaynî's *R. al-Nizâmiyya* and, consequently, that he was not necessarily dependent upon Avicenna (certainly not directly) for these theses and concepts. There remains, however, as we shall see, rather conspicuous evidence, that al-Ghazâlî was deeply and constantly preoccupied with the challenge which Avicenna and his writings posed for him. Indeed, it would seem plausible, if not reasonably evident, that al-Ghazâlî's autobiography was written, at least in part, as a response to that of Avicenna, a response that is complex both in respect to the questions and levels of its address to Avicenna as well as to other matters on which al-Ghazâlî felt challenged. (Regarding the latter, see the interesting article of J. van Ess, "Quelques remarques sur le Munqid min ad-dalâl" in *Ghazâlî, la raison et le miracle*, Paris, 1987, pp. 57 ff.) Though he does not suggest that there is any direct relationship between Avicenna's autobiography and that of al-Ghazâlî, the discussion of the former by D. Gutas in his *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition* (Leiden, 1988, p. 106 and generally Ch. 3, pp. 149 ff.) would seem to point strongly in this direction when read as a foil against which to view the *Munqidh*.

[2] The *Maqsad* was written after *Ihyâ'* and before al-Ghazâlî's return to teaching, probably completed in XI/499 = VII/1106; see G. Hourani, "A Revised Chronology of Ghazâlî's Writings", *JAOS* 104 (1984), p. 298.

express himself more forthrightly and with greater clarity than he generally does else-where in treating the same basic matters. The meaning and the implications of the basic structure and conception of what he says on the basic questions in *Maqsad* we shall then pursue in other works. A number of passages we shall have to examine in dispropor-tionate detail, for it is only in this way that we may discover exactly what in fact he asserts and does not assert in them.[3] What emerges is that, while rejecting significant elements of Avicenna's cosmology, al-Ghazâlî adopted several basic principles and theses that set his theology in fundamental opposition to that of the classical Ash'arite tradition. To what extent his thought in these matters developed or may have changed over the last fifteen years of his life, that is, between the writing of *Maqâsid al-falâsifa* and his death in 505/1111, remains unclear. For the questions we shall examine, to be sure, his thought is presented more fully and more explicitly in works written after his departure from Baghdad in 488/1095, but there is some evidence to suggest that he held the basic doctrines articulated in *Ihyâ'* and the later works already at the time he wrote *Tahâfut* and *Mi'yâr*. A separate and more detailed study will be required to sift the evidence concerning the progress of his thought out satisfactorily. Within the matters embraced by the somewhat narrow scope of the present study, in any case, there appears to be no fundamental inconsistency in his teaching from *Tahâfut* until the end of his life.

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[3] *Tahâfut* presents some peculiar problems, in that he twice states quite unequivocally (pp. 130 f. and 179 ff.) that in this work he means to assert or to defend the truth of no thesis, but only to show the inability of the *falâsifa* to justify the particular theses under discussion. He does, of course, state a number of propositions that he holds to be true and which are important to his theology, but the work is craftily composed and one has to be careful in making any appeal to it as witness either for what he denies or for what he asserts.

2. The Rejection of Traditional Analysis and
The Move Towards Avicenna

In the opening chapter of *Maqṣad* (pp. 17-35) al-Ghazâlî outlines the theoretical framework that underlies and governs his understanding and interpretation of the Most Beautiful Names as linguistic entities and descriptive predicates of God. Here he rejects as imprecise and inadequate the thesis that the name is that which is named (*al-ismu huwa l-musammâ*) and thereby in large measure the formal, linguistic analysis common to the earlier Ash'arite tradition. The purpose of this laborious and polemical refutation is not to reject a bit of somewhat bizarre terminological jargon and to substitute for it a different set of formal expressions which he prefers to employ for the logical analysis of the Divine Names. He could easily have explained the sense of the formula in a few lines and set it aside either as needlessly confusing or as otiose in his context. The formula, for some reason, early received acceptance amongst the Ash'arites as presenting a basic element of orthodox doctrine, though it seldom, if ever, appears verbatim as such in their analysis of predicates. Al-Shîrâzî, for example, says ('*Aqîda*, p. 64, 25), that it is held by those who adhere to the true doctrine (*ahl al-ḥaqq*), though he does not bother to inform the reader how he understands the formula. Its meaning is, in fact, explained in several ways. The one on which al-Ghazâlî generally focuses his attack, however, involves the basic system of the school's formal analysis of predicates. Briefly stated, it is that any descriptive predicate (*waṣf, tasmiyah*), e.g., 'knows', 'moves', 'is alive', can be analysed and paraphrased in a sentence whose subject term is the noun (*ism*) from which the original predicate expression is understood to be derived (*mushtaqq*) and to which it refers or points, e.g., 'knowledge/cognition', 'motion', 'life'. The subject noun of the analytic paraphrase names the entity, attribute, event, or state of affairs which is implicitly named (*musammâ*) and referred to by the predicate of the original proposition and which is, consequently, asserted to exist as a property or characteristic or activity of the referent of the original subject term (e. g., the 'he' of 'he knows'). Following then the analogy of the common terminology where '*ṣifah*' means attribute and '*waṣf*' designates the descriptive term that refers to it, '*ism*' is understood as a general expression for what is referred to and asserted to be by the descriptive predicate and '*tasmiyah*' (the naming) is taken to designate the expression that names or refers to it (cf., e. g., al-Isfarâ'înî, fr. 67). The terminology and the analytic forms are adapted from those of the grammarians. Like the grammarians, the theologians in a number of places use the same expressions as terms both of their metalanguage (to talk about sentences and their analysis) and of their object language (to talk about the entities and their properties that are asserted to exist in the sentences that refer to them and describe them). It would be less confusing to render '*al-ismu huwa l-musammâ*' by 'the noun is what is referentially implied', i. e., implicitly referred to by the descriptive expression of the original predicate, with the understanding that what is asserted to exist is the entity or property or activity that the particular noun, as an expression in the

object language, names and refers to.[4] What al-Ghazâlî does here, however, is to enter into a lengthy discussion in which he depicts the formula as representing an understanding that is essentially confused and inadequate, his aim being to displace the traditional analysis and the propositional logic of the traditional Ash'arite theology in favor of the school logic of the Aristotelians. Thus, for example, he describes the dispute between the Karrâmiyya and the Ash'arites over whether or not '*khâliq*' is eternally true of God as "baseless" (*Maqṣad*, p. 31, 15f.), since '*khâliq*' can be understood either as '[potentially] creating' or as '[actually] creating' (pp. 31 f.).[5] The shift in perspective is not insignificant. The earlier analysis aimed at discovering and explicitly showing what the affirmation of any given predicate implies to be the case at the time it is asserted to be true, i.e., what state of affairs is asserted to obtain. Thus 'creates' (*khâliq*) implies (*iqtaḍâ*) that there is a "creation", i.e., that there exists an event which is an act of creation (*khalq*) whose being is the contingent existence of a creature (*al-khalq* = *al-makhlûq*)[6] and whose actuality is the basis of the truth of the predicate.[7] 'Potentially

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[4] The best account of this from the standpoint of the theologians is found in *Ikhtiṣâr al-Shâmil*, foll. 120vº ff. For a brief and rather unsatisfactory account of it see R. Frank, "Attribute, Attributes, and Being" in *Philosophies of Existence Ancient and Medieval* (ed. P. Morewedge, New York, 1982), pp. 272 ff. and for a clear exposition of the grammarians understanding of the formula see the *Risâla* of al-Baṭalyûsî published by A. Elamrani-Jamal, in "La Question du nom et du nommé", *ZAL*, Heft 15 (1985), pp. 86ff.

[5] There is a somewhat analogous, though generally less polemical, rejection of the traditional analysis of predicates also in *Iqtiṣâd* (pp. 129ff.), where he rejects al-Bâqillânî's analysis and ontological explanation of "to be knowing" (*al-'âlimiyyah*) as «unadulterated fancy» (p. 131) in favor of an interpretation which follows al-Juwaynî's analysis in his *R. al-niẓâmiyyah*. Later in *Iqtiṣâd* (pp. 158f.) in order to illustrate and to validate the use of the predicate 'creates' al-Ghazâlî employs the same example, viz., of how 'cuts' (or 'cutting') is said of a sword both as in potency and in act. Here, however, he does not employ the expressions '*bil-quwwah*' and '*bil-fi'l*', possibly because the overall context is one in which he does not find it appropriate to employ language that is uniquely that of the "logicians" and the *falâsifa*. Nor does he anywhere that I have noted employ '*bil-quwwah*' or '*bil-fi'l*' when speaking of God save in this passage of *Maqṣad*. Even so, al-Ghazâlî's introduction of the distinction here (several additional predicates of action are listed in *Iqtiṣâd, loc. cit.*), raises a problem in that it ambivalently suggests the possibility of temporality in God (as does the future, *sa-yulhimuhâ*: *Maqṣad*, p. 31, 12). This is a question we shall have later to look at more closely. 'Potentially creating' and 'actually creating' may perhaps not be in all respects inappropriately said of God in al-Ghazâlî's theology, since he holds that the world has existed only for a finite period of time. Muslim theologians generally, it should be noted, never managed to conceive God's being as totally removed from any temporal relationship to the world and to the sequences of events that mark the world's time.

[6] Cf., e.g., *Tamhîd*, § 556, *Shâmil* (81), p. 48, 21, *Ikhtiṣâr*, fol. 167vº, 22f., *Sharh al-Irshâd*, fol. 8rº, 4ff., and *Ghunya*, foll. 125vº, 5f. and 180vº, 22.

[7] Part of what is involved here is the understanding of the basic logical form 'SP' as commonly presented in Arabic and with it the sense of the verbal adjective that is the predicate term. All verbal predicates of God are formally recast in a predicational sentence with a nominal predicate (i.e., a sentence of the form *mubtada' – khabar* in which the predicate is a verbal adjective or a participle), regardless of the original form of their occurrence in the Koran or the Tradition (e.g., *muḥṣî, mumît*). This is not simply in order to avoid the particularities of tense and the implied temporal relationships that may attach to any particular context in the canonical sour-

creates', by contrast, is somewhat vague. It will be equivalent to (1) 'can [i. e., has the power to] create' or perhaps to (2) 'knows He will create' and/or 'knows what He will create' or (3) to 'wills to create', etc.; it implies, and its affirmation asserts (*athbata*), the being of God's power (*qudratuhû*) or of His knowledge (*'ilmuhû*) or of His will (*irâdatuhû*) or of all three. In the traditional analysis, in brief, one has to be more precise about what he means and to come clean about his ontological commitments. '*Khâliq*' in a future and/or potential sense is not fully distinct, since in order for the intended ontological assertion to be made clear it must be paraphrased in such a way that the ambivalence is reduced by the introduction of additional terms that spell out what is intended.[8] All other things being equal, there is no prima facie reason to look upon the Aristotelian framework which al-Ghazâlî here espouses as essentially more sophisticated, or as logically more rigorous or as conceptually more profound than the one he is at pains to set aside. What is most important from our present perspective, however, is that in this first chapter al-Ghazâlî puts aside, and sets himself apart from, both the traditional language and the traditional analysis of the Ash'arite school and that he does so in such a way as to associate himself with the language and conceptual universe of the *falâsifa*.[9] This is indicative of several significant aspects of what is to follow in his discussion of the Most Beautiful Names. Since the *Maqṣad* can only be taken as a dogmatic work, this is of considerable importance, for here, in contrast to *Iqtiṣâd* and *Qudsiyya*, he will present not the formal topics and problematic of the

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ces, but because this is the simplest and most basic form of predication (*al-aṣl*) viz., a simple "nominal" sentence in which both the subject and the predicate terms are presented in the most basic grammatical form. In ordinary usage the verbal adjectives and participles are not tensed, but may, according to the requirements of the context and syntactical usage, be heard as past, present, or future. In the formal context of *kalâm*, however, where, employed as the predicate term in a logical form, they are understood to be present; '*khâliq*', thus, is formally equivalent to English 'creates'. If a temporal qualification is to be included this must be done by the addition of a particle that, like modal particles, stands first in the formulation ('*kâna*': it was the case, '*yakûnu*': it will be the case, &c.; note that even in ordinary literary usage Arabic distinguishes '*kâna* SP' = it was the case that SP, '*kâna*-SP' = S was such that P, and 'S *kâna* P': it is the case that S was P). Where the intention of the *kalâm* analysis is to eliminate the ambivalence the words have in ordinary usage ('creates', 'is such as to [be able to] create', 'might create', 'will create', etc.) precisely in order to force the explicit and formal expression of ambivalently implied terms, al-Ghazâlî rejects a dispute that assumes the logically formal use of the word as "baseless". The statement is essentially rhetorical and polemical, a part of his move to supplant the traditional theology with his own adaptation of Avicenna's teaching.

[8] Note that in some of the normal *kalâm* paraphrases '*khâliq*' would continue to be the predicate term (e. g., with the introduction of a temporal particle), though in most it would be found as a subordinate element in the predicate, e. g., in '*yaqdiru llâhu an yakhluqa*' will be analysed as '*Allâhu qâdirun 'alâ an yakhluqa*' = '*Allâhu qâdirun 'alâ l-khalq*'. For an example of the kind of vagueness that may result from al-Ghazâlî's preference for the Aristotelian forms, see n. 159 below.

[9] The shift, of course, has already begun in *Mi'yâr*. It is worth noting that the formal language and analysis he argues for and sets forth in this first chapter of the *Maqṣad* plays no major, explicit role in his ensuing treatment of the Divine Names, save in his analysis of "*al-Ḥaqq*" (pp. 157 ff.), where he puts it to very good use, and where direct dependance on Avicenna is plain to see.

handbook tradition, but a theology of his own, topically formed to a different framework than that of the traditional theology.[10]

The contrast between al-Ghazâlî's *Maqṣad* and al-Qushayrî's *Taḥbîr* is instructive. Al-Qushayrî begins each section by setting out the lexicography of the name and giving a primary theological analysis in the traditional form of those meanings which are applicable to God. Following this brief summary of the traditional material, al-Qushayrî proceeds to a sometimes lengthy exposition, chiefly by way of citations and anecdotes, of the significance of what is asserted, directly and by connotative implication, for the believer's interior life. Al-Qushayrî, it is plain, is writing for an audience who are fully at home with the traditional school theology which forms the foundation of his exposition and who are also in the habit of hearing and grasping the intention of contextually oblique and sometimes abstruse reports, an audience, that is, who are attuned to hearing such reports as hints or direct "pointings" (*ishârât*) at truths, doctrinal or spiritual, whose significance they are able to anticipate and so perceive immediately given the hint. Al-Qushayrî is not trying to say anything new, but to give clarity to common doctrine and to offer insight into its theological and spiritual significance. Al-Ghazâlî's *Maqṣad* is quite different in character and would seem to be directed to a somewhat different audience. Viewed alongside *Taḥbîr*, it appears manifestly as a work whose primary end is theoretical and doctrinal, rather than spiritual. The analysis and the discussion of the significance of the several Most Beautiful Names both as such and for the religious life of the believer tends to be much less subtle and less nuanced in *Maqṣad* than in al-Qushayrî's book. Often he reduces the number of applicable meanings from what was generally recognized in the tradition and thereby reduces proportionately the richness of the theological exposition. In some cases he fails to distinguish separate lexical items, contrary to earlier practice. The sections marked "*Tanbîh*" tend to be dogmatic as compared with the corresponding sections of al-Qushayrî's work. Characteristically, the primary name of God for al-Ghazâlî in *Maqṣad* is not "*al-Ḥaqq*" as it is for the sufis (cf., e. g., *Laṭâ'if* 2, p. 188) but "*al-Khâliq*" (the Creator).[11] It would seem clear, thus, that al-Ghazâlî's audience is one of religious scholars and of religious scholars, moreover, who are not presumed to be altogether familiar with the formal terms and the conclusions he presents. It is plain that he has a primary interest in setting forth a formally ordered conception of God as creator and in propounding a rather elaborate theoretical vision of God's action in the universe and on human beings, a vision, however, which he does not nuance or explain in detail. Whereas al-Qushayrî constantly averts to the intimacy and the universality of God's presence in events and in the activities of creatures and no less than al-Ghazâlî insists over and again on the universal manifestation of His knowledge, will, and activity, the latter's treatment of

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[10] In a few places he sets forth the doctrine of the *falâsifa* even in the *tanbîh* sections, which, by convention, have to do with how the believer is to try to realise analogously in his own life the perfections of God named in the Most Beautiful Divine Names; cf., e. g., pp. 73, 1f., 82f. and 103 f.

[11] Note also that in *Maqṣad* al-Ghazâlî does not include '*huwa*' in it as one of the Names (as does, e. g., al-Qushayrî in *Taḥbîr*, foll. 45v° f. and cp. *Laṭâ'if* 2, p. 188), albeit he does discuss it as such in *Mishkâh* (p. 60), which also is a primarily speculative work.

the topic differs notably by its reïterated and persistent focus on, and elementary description of, the integrated system of the cosmos as a unified whole in which events take place in sequences of interlocking causes and effects. He sets this forth over and again, sometimes in fruitless repetition, outlining his thesis, however, in a formal language that directly recalls the cosmological and theological theories of the *falâsifa* and of Avicenna in particular.

There are a number of passages in *al-Maqṣad* that are clearly dependent on al-Qushayrî's *Taḥbîr*. For example, the section on '*al-Razzâq*' (pp. 90f.) follows *Taḥbîr* (fol. 64r° f.), in part verbatim. The opening of the section on '*al-Laṭîf*' (p. 109, 16-18) is simply a paraphrase of *Taḥbîr*, fol. 75r° (= P. 57; v. also *Laṭâ'if* 5, p. 348). Again, the section on '*al-Ḥafîẓ*' (p. 122, 9-13) is a paraphrase of *Taḥbîr*, fol. 82r°; and the anecdote concerning Moses in the section on '*al-Barr*' (p. 150, 9ff.) is taken directly from *Taḥbîr* (fol. 115r° = p. 84).

There are a number of places, on the other hand, that are quite clearly dependent on Avicenna. Thus in the section on '*al-Awwal wal-âkhir*' (pp. 146f.), al-Ghazâlî, following the Neoplatonic notion of emanation and return, speaks of God as the source of «the ordered chain of beings» (*silsilatu l-mawjûdâti l-mutarattibah*) and of the degrees and ranks by which the "knowers" (*al-'ârifûn*) rise back towards Him. This parallels, for example, *Ishârât*, p. 176, but not the usual exegesis of these two Names (e. g., al-Bayhaqî, *al-Asmâ'*, pp. 9f. and *Taḥbîr*, foll. 113rff. = pp. 82f.).[12] In the section on '*al-Ḥaqq*' (pp. 137f.) al-Ghazâlî speaks of «the being whose existence is necessary in itself» (*al-wâjibu l-wujûdi bi-dhâtihî*) as contrasted to all other beings which in themselves are nullities (*bâṭilun bi-dhâtihî*), since existence does not belong to them of themselves (*lâ yastaḥiqqu l-wujûd*) but rather they exist by necessity through another. The language and the conception are plainly those of Avicenna and the passage would seem to draw directly on *Ilâhiyyât* (p. 356, 1-15), where 'al-Ḥaqq' is discussed as a Divine Name and Koran 28,88 (*kullu shay'in hâlikun illâ wajhahû*) is also cited (cf. also *Ishârât*. pp. 140f. and *'Arshiyya*. pp. 12f. and cp. *ibid.*, p. 11,9).

In the beginning of the section on '*al-Wahhâb*' (pp. 87f.) al-Ghazâlî's description of God as "the one whose liberality is unrestricted" (*al-jawâd*), who bestows benefits without self-interest (*lâ li-gharaḍ*) and not for any return (*lâ li-'iwaḍ*) seems to follow the discussion of God's liberality (*al-jûd*) in *Ishârât* (p. 159).[13] Finally, the section on '*al-Qâdir al-Muqtadir*' (p. 145), where he discusses the essential relationship between God's power (*al-qudrah*) on the one hand and His knowledge and will on the other, is virtually a paraphrase of *'Arshiyya* (p. 11). This we shall have to examine more closely below.

Now, the first of these Avicennian borrowings do little more than reformulate theses

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[12] Cp. *'Arshiyya*, p. 10, 2f. (*ilayhî tantahî l-mawjûdâtu fî silsilatayi t-taraqqî wal-tanazzul*) and also *Ishârât*, p. 181, 16f. For the traditional interpretation, cf. D. Gimaret, *Les Noms divins en Islam* (Paris, 1988), pp. 172ff.

[13] Cf. also *'Arshiyya*, pp. 10, 23f. and 13, 4f. That God acts "*lâ li-gharaḍ*" (or *lâ li-'illah*) is a universal Ash'arite thesis (cf., e. g., *Thaghr*, p. 98, 21, *Mujarrad*, p. 140, 19ff., *Tamhîd*, §54, *Laṭâ'if* 1, p. 92,3, p. 284, & alibi, and *Ikhtiṣâr*, fol. 92r°,7) and is often repeated by al-Ghazâlî (e. g., *Tahâfut*, p. 40, *Iqtiṣâd*, pp. 98, 141, 152 and *Iḥyâ'* 4, p. 294, 32f.), but the language of this passage of *Maqṣad* is unmistakably parallel to that of *Ishârât*, pp. 158f.

and conceptions that are common in al-Ghazâlî's Ashʿarite heritage. From the beginning God was described as "the eternal" (al-qadîm), which is defined as "that whose non-existence is impossible" (al-mustaḥîlu ʿadamuhû).[14] With al-Juwaynî the expression 'the necessary existent' (wâjibu l-wujûd) becomes common.[15] So too, Ibn Fûrak speaks of «the eternal existence and the divinity which belong to God essentially» (mâ yastaḥiqquhû mina l-qidami wal-ilâhiyyah: Mushkil, p. 174, 17) and his student, al-Qushayrî talks of «the necessity of existence and the oneness that belong to Him essentially and His uniqueness in having the power of causing existence» (Taḥbîr, fol. 78v = p. 56). Here, then, though following the Metaphysics of the Shifâ', al-Ghazâlî seems to do little more than borrow the language, and even there, language that has clear precedents, both in expression and sense in the Ashʿarite tradition.[16]

When, however, al-Ghazâlî deals with the order and perfection of the universe, «the ordered chain of beings», and their relationship to God's eternal knowledge, will, and power, his use of Avicenna gives rise to a number of questions. He shows considerably more interest in theoretical cosmology than do his theological predecessors and discusses it at some length in several works. The longest individual sections of Maqṣad are, in fact, devoted to this topic. Almost all of God's Most Beautiful Names refer, in one way or another, to His action and His relationship to His creatures and al-Ghazâlî insists, as had others before him, that to understand the significance of the Names one has to understand God's action as referred to and described by them (e. g., Maqṣad, pp. 54 f., 57, 81 and 110). There would seem to be little doubt that al-Ghazâlî's agonising quest for cognitive certitude was in large part resolved by his confidence in his own contemplative grasp of the operation of God's activity in creation in the terms of his own adaptation of the Avicennian model. One notes that of the three stages of the knowledge of God the last and highest is that of knowing the universal operation of God's power in the universe and the uniqueness of His agency (e. g., Iḥyâ' 4, pp. 79 f. and 240 f., with which cp. Risâla 4, pp. 41 ff.). This highest level of knowing is what he elsewhere terms a "cognitive gnosis" (ʿirfânun ʿilmî: Mishkâh, p. 57, 3), which is that one have actual and certain knowledge of God's universal governance without, however, having to keep the rational demonstrations in view in order to warrent his certitude. The basic idea is common enough with the sufis. What is peculiar to al-Ghazâlî's work is the importance he places on the intellectual vision of the whole, i. e., on the possession of an articulated theoretical understanding of the universal system.

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[14] Cf., e. g., Thaghr, p. 82, 13 f. and Lumaʿ(A), § 33, Tamhîd, §§ 52 f. (where the distinctions made by Avicenna are also stated) and Inṣâf, pp. 37 f. (where Koran 28, 88 is also cited) and also al-Isfarâʾînî, ʿaqîda, § IV, 15, Irshâd, pp. 21 f. and Shâmil (69), p. 186 ult. Note that in classical kalâm texts 'istaḥâla, yastaḥîlu' is most often used of what involves a logical contradiction.

[15] The expression occurs already with al-Isfarâʾînî (cf. Fr. 12 and the remarks ad loc.); for al-Juwaynî's use, cf., e. g., Shâmil (69), pp. 540 f., 617 f., and p. 197, 2 f., where the necessary existence is contrasted to that whose being is merely possible (jâʾizu l-wujûd: reading jâʾiz with the Tehran ms. against the editor's khâṣṣ), Irshâd, pp. 59, 3 and 84, ult. (on which see al-Anṣârî's Sharḥ, foll. 48vᵒ ff.); note also ibid., fol. 160r, 18 f.: wa-qâla baʿḍu l-mutakallimîna akhaṣṣu waṣfihî wujûbu l-wujûd.

[16] For a somewhat analogous analysis in wholly traditional language, cf., e. g., Iḥyâ' 4, p. 76, 17 ff. Al-Ghazâlî's use of traditional language and formulæ we shall examine later.

In sharp contrast to the occasionalism of classical Ash'arism, al-Ghazâlî describes the universe as an integrated system of entities and events bound together in an interlocking order of causes and intermediaries (*asbâb* and *wasâ'iṭ*).[17] He speaks of causes that are ordered to their effects (*musabbabât*) (e. g. *Maqṣad*, pp. 98 and 109) both with respect to the internal antecedents of human voluntary actions and with respect to purely physical events in the world. The intermediaries include «angels and men and inanimate things» (*Maqṣad*, 156, ult.). Thus he speaks of God as the one Who «makes the causes function as causes» (*musabbibu l-asbâb*).[18] In contrast to earlier Ash'arites he speaks of (secondary) "causes" as producing or necessitating (*awjaba, yûjibu*) their "effects"[19] and speaks also of generated effects (*mutawallidah*).[20] Lower more proximate and immediate causes are governed by higher «universal, permanent causes» (*asbâbun kulliyyatun dâ'imah: Maqṣad*, p. 98, 17), of which the first is God's Throne. «The universe has the character of a single individual composed of many members» (*Maqṣad*, p. 81, 14f. and p. 152, 11f.).

Within the framework and context of his theological cosmology al-Ghazâlî describes God's creation of the universe, sometimes explicitly and sometimes by allusion, as

[17] The terms are common enough in theological writings; abû Ṭâlib al-Makkî speaks frequently of "causes" and "intermediaries" (e. g., *Qût* 2, pp. 102f. and 3, p. 15, 13f.) as do Ash'arite authors too. Commonly 'causes' (*asbâb*) is used of inanimate beings and 'intermediaries' (*wasâ'iṭ*) of animate beings, as in "those who neither attribute [benefits] to their causes nor thank the intermediaries" but thank God (*Laṭâ'if* 5, p. 179); thus '*wâsiṭah*' (and '*wasîṭah*', both with plural *wasâ'iṭ*) is used of Muḥammad (e. g., *ibid*. 1, p. 70) and of prophets in general (e. g., *ibid*. p. 227, ult. and *Mushkil*, p. 94, 11ff.). The expressions are, however, understood to be fundamentally equivalent, as intermediaries are defined as «the causes that are between God and His creatures» (*al-asbâbu l-latî bayna l-ḥaqqi wal-khalq: al-'Ibârât*, p. 52, no. 39; cf. also *ibid*., no. 92). For al-Ghazâlî the "intermediaries" are angels, men, and inanimate beings (e. g., *Maqṣad*, p. 156, *ult*.). How the various classes of intermediaries function we shall take up below. We may note here that the intermediate role of angels in Gods's creation plays an important role in the theology of al-Ghazâlî (cf., generally, *Tahâfut*, pp. 278ff., *Iḥyâ'* 4, p. 118f., and *Fayṣal*, pp. 40f., where he gives an interpretation of the expression which is wholly incompatible with the traditional exegesis of it by the Ash'arites; concerning this see our "Al-Ghazâlî's use of Avicenna's Philosophy", cited above). They are the intermediaries in God's "usual way of making things happen" and each has a unique role (e. g., *Iḥyâ'* 4, p. 119, 5ff. and *Maqṣad*, p. 122, 11ff.) The motion of each celestial sphere is governed by an angel (see n. 87 below). Angels have a special function in the combination and behavior of the elements (*Maqṣad*, pp. 119f. and esp. 122). Concerning the semantics and usage of '*sabab*' see below.

[18] For the expression '*musabbibu l-asbâb*' cf., e. g., *Tahâfut*, p. 65, 4 and p. 182, 11, *Maqṣad*, p. 116, 13, *Iḥyâ'* 1, p. 74, 7 and 4, p. 87, p. 94, 5f., and p. 261, 14, *Arba'în*, p. 13 (where also «tasalsulu l-asbâbi wal-musabbabât»), *et alibi pass*. The expression is found already in *Qût* (e. g., 2, p. 109, 23f. and 3, p. 15, 24) and is used also by Avicenna (e. g., *Ilâhiyyât*, p. 4, 16 and *'Arshiyya*, p. 7,9).

[19] Of purely physical causation, cf., e g., *Maqṣad*, p. 100, 13, p. 101, 10, and cp. p. 103; and of the internal antecedents of voluntary actions, see below. Note that '*awjaba, yûjibu*' is often employed as an equivalent of '*iqtaḍâ, yaqtaḍî*'. Note too that whereas in common Muslim usage '*sakhkhara, yusakhkhiru*' is normally employed with God as the subject, al-Ghazâlî occasionally employs it of the relation of secondary "causes" to their "effects"; e. g., *Iḥyâ'* 4, p. 249, 14f.

[20] For al-Ghazâlî's use of '*wallada, yuwallidu*' and '*tawallada, yatawalladu*' see below.

articulated in three levels or moments, the last of which is the material realisation of the temporally contingent phenomena of the sublunary world. In *Maqṣad* these three levels of creation are referred to or described schematically in three sets of terms which occur repeatedly, in diverse contexts and in a variety of expressions. The triad appears for the first time where, anticipating the subsequent elaboration of the theme, he speaks of «[God's] intelligibles, the marvels of the things in which His power is exercised, and the wonders of His signs in this world and the next».[21] They are set forth formally for the first time in the section dealing with *'al-Khâliq'*, *'al-Bâri''*, and *'al-Muṣawwir'* (pp. 81ff.), which are treated together precisely in order to set the triadic scheme out in a systematic manner.

The first term here, *'al-Khâliq'* (He who creates, the Creator) al-Ghazâlî takes to name God with reference to His Determination, His apportioning creation according to order and measure (*at-taqdîr*: e.g., *Maqṣad*, pp. 79, 81, and 102). Al-Bâqillâni understands the word according to one usage in ordinary language as desgnating a mental determination (*taqdîru l-qalbi wa-fikratuhû*) that takes place before something is done.[22] Al-Ghazâlî chooses this as the formal meaning of *'khalaqa, yakhluqu'* and so

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[21] *Maqṣad*, p. 56, 6f. (*maʿlûmâtuhû wa-ʿajâ'ibu maqdûrâtihî wa-badâ'i'u âyâtihî ...*); cp. *ibid*, p. 57, 19ff. In earlier Ashʿarite usage *'maʿlûmâtu llâh'* normally means the individual objects of His knowledge, i.e., the infinite set of particular entities and events, both possible and already created, which He knows. In this context however, because of the schematic triad which al-Ghazâlî sets out and refers to over and again, its is clear that *'maʿlûmât* is equivalent to *'maʿ-qûlât'* in the lexicon of the *falâsifa* and means the intelligible universals as present in the Divine knowing. (Concerning al-Ghazâlî's conception of the possibles as universals and God's knowledge of them, see below). Although al-Ghazâlî follows Avicenna's vocabulary in many things, it is to be noted that he does not here (or generally) employ *'maʿqûlât'* in this sense. His avoidance of the term in the present and analogous contexts may be because he may not use the word *''aql'* to describe God because of the universal prohibition of its use by the Ashʿarites (cf., e.g., *Sharḥ al-Irshâd*, fol. 136r°). If *Maqṣad*, p. 56, 6f. be read in isolation, it is not immediately apparent that *'maqdûrâtuhû'* and *'âyâtuhû* are to be understood as designating two different domains; viewed, however, in the immediate context, it is clear that «*ʿajâ'ibu l-maqdûrât*» must refer to the ordered system of the universal causes; see below.

[22] Cf., *Tamhîd*, §§ 532f. The use of *'khalaqa, yakhluqu'* as an equivalent of *'qaddara, yuqaddiru'* is commonly recognized by the lexicographers (cf., e.g., *Maqâyîs* and al-Jawharî, s.v. and al-Zajjâj, p. 35). The orthodox theologians commonly accept this equivalence as supplying a valid interpretation of *'al-khâliq'* as one of the names of God (e.g., al-Ḥalîmî, cited by al-Bayhaqî in *Asmâ'*, p. 25; see also *Inṣâf*, p. 149, 20ff., *Ghunya*, fol. 118v, 2ff. and generally Gimaret, *Noms*, pp. 280ff.), though it is expressly rejected by al-Qushayrî (*Taḥbîr*, fol. 57r) because of its use by the Muʿtazila. That within the general context of al-Ghazâlî's thought *'al-taqdîr'* evokes the use of *'qaddara, yuqaddiru*, in the Koran (e.g., 10.5, 41.10, and particularly 25.2) in a connotationally formal sense will become apparent as we proceed. *'Khalaqa'* (to create) and *'khalaqa'* (to determine, to dispose according to determined measure) are two distinct lexemes in ordinary Arabic, the latter of which al-Ghazâlî prefers for his formal usage. Thus when he speaks of «*khalqu llâhi wa-khtirâ'uhû*» (e.g., *Maqṣad*, p. 83, 14f. and *Iḥyâ'*1, p. 90, 29) the terms are not employed as synonyms and *'khalq'* is not, therefore, to be rendered 'creation' in the present context. The series of the three fundamental terms are presented together, in sequence, in *Maqṣad*, pp. 76, 98 (where read *ḥukm* for the editor's *ḥakam* in line 9), 100, and 105.

employs the verb to name the originating moment or level of God's creating. God's Determination, thus, is directly associated with His Knowledge and Will (*ibid.*, p. 145, 2) and so as well with his Judgement (*al-ḥukm*) (ibid., pp. 98, 100, 102, *et alibi*) and His Wisdom (*al-ḥikmah*) (*ibid.*, p. 98). It is also identified with His Ordering (*tadbîr*) (ibid., pp. 98, 100, and 102) and so with His Command (*al-amr*) (ibid., p. 98, 16 f., citing Q 54.50, and, by allusion, p. 102, 6 f.).[23]

The second term here, '*al-Bâri*'' he takes as formally naming God with reference to His causing existence (*al-îjâd*) (*Maqṣad*, pp. 79 and 81), i.e., in the creation of the primary, permanent entities (ibid., p. 100, 10 f.) in accord with his Knowledge and Will.[24] This is identified with His general providence, i.e., His Liberality (*jûduhû*) (e.g., *Maqṣad*, pp. 105 f. and 111) and with His Accomplishment (*al-qaḍâ'*) (*ibid.*, pp. 98 and 100 and *Iḥyâ'* 4, p. 94, 8 f.),[25] which follows His prior Determination. The accomplishment is the establishment of the universal causes (*Maqṣad*, p. 98, 10 f.). It is God's Mastery (*al-istîlâ'*) (*Maqṣad*, p. 117, 12 f.), i.e., His governance of the universe through the angel that is indentified with the Throne and its angelic bearers.

The third term here, '*al-Muṣawwir*' (the one who forms, shapes) al-Ghazâlî takes as referring to God's «ordering the forms of created beings according to the best ordering» (*aḥsanu l-tartîb*) (*Maqṣad*, pp. 81, 12 and 109, 14 f.) and His «forming them according to the best formation» (*aḥsanu l-taṣwîr*) (*ibid.*, p. 81, 12 f.).[26] Specifically, he associates

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[23] Concerning Q 54.50 see below. The Command here is to be identified with God's imperative, "Be" (*kun*). This association is often asserted on the basis of Q 7.54 (*a-lâ lahu l-khalqu wal-amr*: "do not command and creation belong to Him?") in order to distinguish God's speaking (*kalâmuhû*) from the created world. How closely (or how consistently) al-Ghazâlî identifies the Command with God's Speaking we shall have to look into later.

[24] The lexicographers distinguish two basic meanings of '*bara'a, yabru'u*', in one of which it is equivalent to '*khalaqa, yakhluqu*' (in the sense 'to create') and in the other it has the meaning to be (or become) remote from something. Ibn Fâris, e.g., (*Maqâyîs, s. v.*) sees here two distinct roots, while al-Zajjâj sees only one and so says (*op. cit.*, §13) that '*bara'a, yabru'u*' is not a simple equivalent of '*khalaqa, yakhluqu*' but means «creation in a particular way» (*khalqun 'alâ ṣifah*: i.e., that the thing is created having particular characteristics).

[25] Note that '*al-qaḍâ*' here should not be understood, as it usually is, as "decree", but rather as a perfect making. Al-Jawharî notes that the word is often used as an equivalent of '*ṣana'a, yaṣna'u*' and '*qaddara, yuqaddiru*' and as witness cites Q 41.12 (*qaḍâhunna sab'a samawâtin fî yawmayni wa-awḥâ kulla samâ'in amrahâ*). The same verse is cited in *Maqṣad*, p. 98, 13 f. and also by Ibn Fâris, who defines '*qaḍâ, yaqḍî*' by '*aḥkama, yuḥkimu*' (to do something skilfully, correctly, perfectly: *Maqâyîs, s. v.*). That this is a formal sense of the verb for al-Ghazâlî is made fully obvious in *Maqṣad*, p. 100, 10-13. Note, however, that he does not employ '*al-qaḍâ*'' exclusively in this sense; he speaks, e.g., in *Maqṣad*, p. 103, of «the eternal decree» (*al-qaḍâ'u l-azalî*) and it is this decree that is refered to in *Iḥyâ'* 4, p. 94, 5 ff. and is to be associated with God's *ḥukm* and His *amr*.

[26] Cf. Q 40.64 and 95.4, cited by al-Qushayrî in *Taḥbîr*, fol. 59r° (= p. 36). It is, as we have noted, the occurrence of the three words in series in Q 59.24 that underlies al-Ghazâlî's placing of 'forming' as the last term in the series; even so, it is worth noting that in commenting 40.64 al-Qushayrî remarks (*Laṭâ'if, ad loc.*) that the expression '*aḥsanu l-ṣuwar*' is not used of the creation of «the Throne and the Footstool and the heavens and the lands and the totality of created things».

God's shaping things with His causing the coming to be of individual beings and events. «God's knowledge of the forms is a cause of the existence of the forms in particulars» (*Maqṣad*, p. 83, 9f.; v. also pp. 92, 10f. and 93, 8f.). He creates them first in the Throne (*Iljâm*, p. 20) and through the chain of secondary causes they are contingently realised in particular, sublunary beings. This directing of primary causes to the particular «effects that proceed from them» is God's *Qadar* (ordainment) (*Maqṣad*, p. 98, 14ff. and *Iḥyâ'* 4, p. 94, 8). So understood, «His Ordainment is the setting out of the particulars of His prior Accomplishment through causing them to exist in external material substrates, one after another».[27] His ordering and forming of particulars is identified with His Justice ('*adl*) (*Maqṣad*, pp. 105, 16f. and 111, 6f.), since this is the best possible order of things (*niẓâm*) (*Maqṣad*, pp. 47, 12f.).

All of this sounds very much like Avicenna.[28] How strictly, though, and how consistently does al-Ghazâlî follow Avicenna and, insofar as he does follow him, to what extent is his theology compatible with the orthodox or Ash'arite theological tradition? Beneath the rhetorical eloquence of his style and the richness of his language, to what theological propositions does he commit himself and to what extent does he attempt to justify these propositions in theological reasoning?

In order to get a clearer view of what exactly is al-Ghazâlî's teaching on these problems, it will be best to look at his understanding of the several levels of creation systematically, beginning with the lowest plane of creation, viz., that of the occurrence of temporal events in the sublunary sphere.[29]

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[27] *Arba'în*, p. 11: *al-qadaru huwa tafṣîlu qaḍâ'ihi l-sâbiqi bi-îjâdihâ fî l-mawâddi l-khârijati wâḥidan ba'da wâḥid.* (The definition is part of a quotation from a *Commentary on al-Maṣâbîḥ* by a person whom he refers to as al-imâm mawlânâ 'Alâ'uddîn, whom I have been unable to identify. The '-*hâ*' of '*îjâdihâ*' here refers to "the totality of existent beings" preceding.) Cp. *Iḥyâ'* 4, p. 94, 8f., where he says that 'ordainment' is a metaphorical expression for «the detailing which continues endlessly» (*al-tafṣîlu l-mutamâdî ilâ ghayri nihâyah*). Note that Avicenna ('*Arshiyya*, p. 16) identifies *al-Qadar* with «the causes necessitating their effects» and distinguishes it from *al-Qaḍâ'*; with this cf. also his *Mabâḥith*, § 470: «written on a piece of paper was 'the *Qadar* is the existence of the higher and lower causes and the precision of their order and their system (*wujûdu l-'ilali wal-asbâbi wa-ttisâquhâ 'alâ tartîbihâ wa-niẓâmihâ*) until it finally arrives at the result and the effect' (*al-ma'lûlu wal-musabbab*); it is what is necessitated by the *Qaḍâ'* and its consequent». Unlike al-Ghazâlî, however, Avicenna does not identify the latter with God's Judgement, though note the phrase, «"*lâ mu'aqqiba li-ḥukmihî*" [Q 13.41] *wa-lâ râdda li-qaḍâ-'ihî*» in '*Arshiyya*, p. 17, 1. f.

[28] Cp., e.g., *Ilâhiyyât*, pp. 414ff. (= *Najâh*, pp. 248ff.) and 418, 5ff. (= *Najâh*, p. 287, 9ff.), as well as *Ilâhiyyât*, pp. 159ff. and 185ff., and '*Arshiyya*, pp. 15f.; and see Gardet, *La Pensée religieuse d'Avicenne*, Paris, 1951, p. 132 and G. Hourani, "Ibn Sînâ's Essay on the Secret of Destiny", *BSOAS* 29 (1966), p. 36. Al-Ghazâlî's association of the thesis that God acts for no end (*gharaḍ*) with His liberality (*jûd*) (e.g., *Maqṣad*, p. 87, *Iḥyâ'* 4, p. 294, 28ff., and *Iqtiṣâd*, p. 165) is also reminiscent of Avicenna; cf, e.g., *Ilâhiyyât*, p. 366 (= *Najâh*, p. 250), where the language reflects that of Muslim religious discourse, and '*Arshiyya*, pp. 10f.

[29] There is a superficial examination of al-Ghazâlî's treatment of the question of creation and causation in the sublunary world in B. Abrahamov, "Al-Ghazâlî's theory of causality", *Studia Islamica* (1988), pp. 75ff.

3. The Ordering of Causes and Events within the World

3.1.1 Sublunary Causes and the Fulfillment of Conditions

Al-Ghazâlî's conception of "causes" (*asbâb*) and their "effects" does not seem, at least on first reading, to conform unambivalently to that of Avicenna and the *falâsifa*. Against the *falâsifa* he says that things (created entities) have no activity that is truly their own and would seem to imply that neither is there any activity which flows from things by their natures nor do human agents, properly speaking, originate either their voluntary actions or those which they do by deliberate choice.

Of God's actions that take place in the sublunary world, «some, al-Ghazâlî says, are the locus of others» (*Ihyâ'* 4, p. 86, ult.) and «some of His actions are causes of others» (*ibid*, p. 87, 5 f.). But however this may be, it remains that «there is no agent other than God; it is the case with every [contingent] existent, whether human or ... any other that can be named, that the one who alone initiates its existence and creates it is God».[30] «God creates the action and creates the substrate which receives [it] and creates the conditions of its reception and whatever contributes to it».[31]

That there is, strictly speaking, no agent but God is a common Ash'arite thesis (cf., e. g., al-Mutawallî, p. 27, 18 and *Irshâd*, p. 110, 3). Thus «'to act' (*al-fa'l*) is an expression for making come to be; ... to act is to bring a thing from non-existence into existence by making it come to be» (*Tahâfut*, p. 103).[32] In the traditional Ash'arite theology no being or event in the world produces or causes another. Rather every event is viewed as a discrete occurrence that is created by God immediately and the consistent or normal sequence of events that appear to be related as cause and effect is simply the sequence in which events are ordinarily made to occur (*ijrâ'u l-'âdah*) in an occasionalistic universe. For al-Ghazâlî, however, the matter is different, as he formally posits the presence of various "intermediaries" and "causes". The formula "there is no agent but God" will have, therefore, to be understood differently than it is in his Ash'arite pre-

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[30] *Lâ fâ'ila illâ llâhu ta'âlâ wa-inna kulla mawjûdin min khalqin wa ... ilâ ghayri dhâlika mimmâ yantaliqu ilayhi smun, fal-munfaridu bi-ibdâ'ihî huwa: Ihyâ'* 4, p. 242, 4f. The English is somewhat awkward, but the logical subject of the second sentence is "*kullu mawjûdin*". There are, thus, two assertions, one concerning God and the other concerning creatures.

[31] [*Huwa*] *khâliqu l-mahalli l-qâbili wa-khâliqu sharâ'iti qabûlihî wa-mâ yaktanifuhû: Maqsad,* p. 125, 9 f.; note that '*khalaqa*' is here used in its ordinary sense, not in the formal sense assigned by al-Ghazâlî that we noted above.

[32] «Thus those who attribute every [action] to God are the ones who use the word in the strict sense and know the truth and the proper sense [of the word] while those who attribute it to others are the ones who employ metaphors and images in their speaking; ... the one who determined the lexicon stipulated the noun 'agent' for the one who creates» (*al-mukhtari'*): *Ihyâ'* 4, p. 252, 1 f. Thus «there are in existence only God and His actions ...» (*Maqsad*, p. 57; cf. also *ibid*, pp. 84 and 108); cp. *'Arshiyya*, p. 10: *kullu mâ siwâhu fi'luhû wa-hwa fâ'iluhû wa-mûjiduhû.*

decessors or, at any rate, nuanced, depending on the status that is to be assigned to the intermediate causes. If we understand the meaning of causing something to exist and making it come to be narrowly and rigorously as to determine its coming to be out of the wholly indeterminate possibility of its existing or not existing, then it is clear that in a totally deterministic universe there can be no agent other than God. That is to say, in any determinate sequence of causes and effects the existence (or occurrence) of the last member, as of each of the intermediate members, of the series is made necessary by the action of the cause that initiated the sequence as such out of the indifferent possibility of its being or not being, for within the series the existence of each member, save that of the first, initiating cause or agent, is necessary given that of its immediate antecedent.

Al-Ghazâlî suggests in several places that while it is obvious enough that the apparent causal sequences of natural events (e. g., where one body moves another) must ultimately be originated by God, «the first mover, of Whom there is no mover and Who in Himself does not move», the matter is not so clear in the case of the actions of human agents. To this he says, however, that whatever may be the appearances, any one who thinks that a human agent autonomously initiates the existence of his own acts and is truly the cause both of the act and of its consequences is like someone who blames the existence of a royal decree and its consequences on the pen that was used to write it (*Ihyâ'* 4, p. 242, 14 ff.). Human actions that are consequent upon choice (*ikhtiyâr*), he says, give the false impression that it is the human agent who causes the existence of the act. This cannot be the case, however. No volition depends upon a prior volition, for if it did, an infinite regression would ensue (*ibid.*, p. 248, 6 f.).

> Whenever the act of the will (*al-mashî'ah*) which directs (*tuṣrifu*) the power of acting (*al-qudrah*) to its object exists, the power of acting is inevitably moved (*inṣarafat*); there is no way for it to do otherwise. The motion then follows determinately (*ḍarûratan*) as a consequent of the power of acting (*lâzimatun bil-qudrah*). The power of acting moves (*mutaḥarrikah*) determinately given the decisive act of the will and the act of the will occurs in the mind determinately (*ḍarûratan*). These are determinate necessities (*ḍarûrât*) that are ordered to one another. It is not the individual's to prevent (*an yadfaʿ*) the existence of the act of volition or the subsequent movement (*inṣirâf*) of the power of acting to its object or the motion once the will has dispatched (*baʿda baʿth*) the power of acting; he is subject to determinant constraint in every step of the process (*muḍṭarrun fî l-jamîʿ*). (*Ihyâ'* 4, 248, 7 ff.).

Al-Ghazâlî goes on then to give a detailed analysis of voluntary actions noting that choices are a kind of volition regarding what is advantageous or disadvantageous[33] and that volitions are determined by the mind's judgement (*ḥukm*) following perception, imagination, reflection, or understanding. Such antecedents determine the volition as a decisive judgement (*ḥukmun jazm*).

[33] '*Khayr*' and '*sharr*'; though these words are commonly (and often appropriately) rendered by 'good' and 'evil', they are normally employed in the formal terminology of *kalâm* in the sense of 'advantageous' or 'beneficial' and of 'harmful' or 'detrimental' respectively; cf., e. g., *Mujarrad*, p. 97, 5 f. and *Laṭâ'if* 4, p. 145, *ad* 20.89.

The voluntary motivation (*dâ'iyatu l-irâdah*)[34] is forced to operate (*musakh-kharah*) by the mind (*'aql*) and sensation; the power of action (*al-qudrah*) is forced to operate by the motivation, and the motion is forced to occur by the power of action. The entire series of events is determined in him of necessity (*muqaddarun bil-ḍarûrati fîhî*) in such a way that he is unaware of it. He is simply a locus of these things and a place in which they occur (*maḥallun wa-majran li-hâdhihi l-umûr*). ... That he choose means simply that he is the locus of a volition that comes to be in him by force of necessity (*jabran*) once the mind has judged that the action is altogether good and appropriate and the judgement comes to be by force of necessity.[35]

God thus, through various intermediaries,

supplies the obedient with the causes of their obedience (*asbâbu l-ṭâ'ah*) so that willy-nilly they obey and the disobedient with the motivations for disobedience (*dawâ'î l-ma'âṣî*) so that willy-nilly they disobey, for whenever He creates distraction and desire and the power to fulfill the desire (*al-qudratu 'alâ qaḍâ'i l-shahwah*) the act takes place though it by determinate necessity (*kâna l-fi'lu wâqi'an bihâ bil-ḍarûrah*) (*Iḥyâ'* 4, p. 165, 16-18).

This is quite reminiscent of Avicenna, who says, for example.

All volitions come to be after not having been. Accordingly, they have causes which converge and necessitate them. A volition does not exist because of a [prior] volition; otherwise there would be an infinite regression. Nor does it exist by nature; otherwise the volition would be inevitable as long as the nature exists. Rather, volitions occur because of the occurrence of causes, which are the things that causally necessitate [them]. Motivations are traceable to earthly and celestial beings and these necessarily cause the occurrence of this particular volition (*takûnu mûjibatan ḍarûratan li-tîlka l-irâdah*).[36]

[34] The expression '*dâ'iyatu l-irâdah*' seems curious, since the motivation, properly speaking, is the cognitive act of the mind or the sensation that moves the will. What it appears to mean here is the motivation as embodied in the volition to the particular act.

[35] *Iḥyâ'* 4, p. 249, 19-24; see generally pp. 241-250 and cp. *Arba'în*, p. 242 and *Maqṣad*, pp. 103f. and 156f. Note that what is implied in '*maḥallun wa-majran*' here appears in some respects to be very close to the traditional Ash'arite conception. Exploiting the connotations of the use of the verb '*sakhkhara, yusakhkhiru*' in the Koran with God as the subject (e. g., 13,2, 14.32, 29.61, *et alibi pass.*, where it is taken to mean «to subject to His command and His will» [*dhallalahû li-amrihî wa-irâdatihî*]: Ibn Fâris, s. v.), al-Ghazâlî employs it almost as a formal expression. It is understood basically to mean «to force someone to do what he does not wish to do, to subdue» (Ibn Sîda, s. v.), «to subdue, to subject» (*qahartuhû, dhallaltuhû*: Lisân al-'Arab, s. v.), «to require/to force someone to work without compensation» (*kallafahû 'amalan bi-lâ 'ujrah*: al-Jawharî, s. v.). Avicenna uses it in *Ajrâm* (p. 47,3) of action that takes place without antecedent volition.

[36] *Ilâhiyyât*, p. 437, 1-5 (= *Najâh*, p. 300, 12-15); cf. also the almost identical statement, *ibid*, p. 439, 12-15 (= *Najâh*, p. 302, 14-17).

The question is, however, exactly how does al-Ghazâlî understand the causal relationships between the terms of the series of events he describes. To assert that «the cognition produced (*wallada*) the volition and that the volition produced the power and the power produced the motion and that each subsequent event came to be from the one immediately antecedent» would, he says, be to assert «that something comes to be not from the power of God» (*Ihyâ'* 4, p. 249, 23 ff.).

> Some of the objects of [God's] power are ordered to (*mutarattibun 'alâ*) others in their coming to be as what is conditioned is ordered to its condition. No volition proceeds from the eternal Power save after a cognition and no cognition save after there is life and no life save after there is a substrate of life. Just as you cannot say that life comes to be (*tahsulu*) from the body which is the condition of life, so also it is with the rest of the ranks of the ordering (*darajâtu l-tartîb*), save that often some of the conditions are apparent to the common people and some of them only to the élite who receive direct vision through the light of the Truth (*ibid.*, p. 249, 29 ff.) ...
>
> The servant acts in one sense and God (the Mighty, the Glorious) acts in another sense. That God is an agent means that He is the one Who creates and Who causes to exist (*al-mukhtari'u l-mûjid*). That the servant acts is that he is the locus (*mahall*) in which [God] creates the power to act after He has created the volition in it after He has created the cognitive act in it, so that the power to act is related to the volition and the movement to the power to act as what is conditioned is related to its condition, but is related to God's power as what is caused is related to its cause (*irtibâta l-ma'lûli bil-'illah*) and as what is created is related to the one who creates it.[37]

The example of the series of conditions in the realisation of a voluntary act is set forth more fully where he says,

> The utterance 'do', even if it occurs on the tongue of the Apostle (God bless him and give him peace), is one of God's acts and is a cause of men's knowing that action is beneficial. Their knowledge too is one of God's acts and the knowledge is a cause of the arousal of a decisive motivation for movement and the act of obedience; and the arousal of the motivation is also one of God's acts

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[37] *Ihyâ'* 4, p. 250, 26 ff., reading *irtibâta l-mashrûti bil-sharti* for *irtibâta l-sharti bil-mashrût* in line 28 as is required by the sense (cp. p. 249, 29 f.); see generally *ibid.*, pp. 86 f. and 249 f. and also *Tahâfut*, pp. 277 ff., *Mi'yâr*, pp. 109 f. (discussed by M. Marmura in "Ghazâlî and Demonstrative Reasoning", *JHP* 3 (1965), pp. 294 ff.), and *Iqtisâd*, pp. 96 ff. and 223 f., where several examples involving different kinds of events are discussed. The expression "*irtibâtu l-ma'lûli bil-'illah*" here would seem perhaps a little curious since in *Tahâfut*, p. 96 f., he rejects the *falâsifa's* assertion that God is related to creation (*al-'âlam*) as the '*illah* to its *ma'lûl* (but cf. *Maqâsid* 2, pp. 43 ff. where he uses '*illah*' and '*ma'lûl*' to explicitate the meaning of '*sabab*' and '*musabbab*'). In the present context, however, he has to use these expressions for the sake of clarity because he has explicitly stated that he means '*sabab*' and '*musabbab*' in the sense of 'condition' and 'what is conditioned'.

and is the cause of the movement of the limbs, which is one of God's acts too. But some of His actions are causes of others. That is to say, the first is the condition of the second, just as the creation of the body is the cause of the creation of the accident, since He does not create the accident before it and the creation of life is the condition of the creation of knowledge and the creation of knowledge is the condition of the creation of the volition and all are actions of God. Some of them are causes of the others; that is, they are their conditions. The meaning of their being conditions is that only a material substrate (*jawhar*) is ready to receive the making of life (*musta'iddun li-qabûli fa'li l-ḥayâh*) and only a living being to receive cognition and a being that has cognition to receive volition. Thus some of His acts are causes of others in this sense, not in the sense that some of His actions cause the existence of others (*mûjidun li-ghay-rihî*), but rather that they furnish the conditions of the actuality of others (*mumahhidu sharṭi l-ḥuṣûli li-ghayrihî*). When one truly knows this to be the fact (*ḥuqqiqa*) he rises to the level of awareness of the unicity of God (*al-tawḥîd*) that we spoke of.[38]

There are several difficulties in all this, however, for the exact sense and coherence of what he has to say are not immediately evident. In the passage in *Iḥyâ'* 4, pp. 248f., for example, his language seems to speak quite plainly of intermediate efficient causality, of one thing's (or one event's) being the immediate, effective cause of the realisation of another. «Volition is aroused by the cognitive act» (*tanba'ithu bil-'ilm: ibid.*, p. 248, 31) and, «where perception is indecisive, by the mind's suggestion» (*bi-ishârati l-'aql: ibid.* p. 249, 4); «the motivation of the volition is forced to operate (*musakhkharah*) by the mind and sense» (ibid., p. 249, 14).[39] So too, volition directs and applies the power of

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[38] *Iḥyâ'* 4, pp. 86f.; cf. also *al-Iqtiṣâd*, p. 97, where he carries the series one step further back, noting that the existence of a spatial location (*ḥayyiz*) is the condition of the existence of the atom or material substrate (*jawhar*). Regarding the sense in which he uses 'jawhar', cf. *Iqtiṣâd*, p. 24, where, following the traditional Ash'arite vocabulary he speaks of «*jawharan fardan wa-ini 'talafa ilâ ghayrihî nusammîhi jisman*». In *Iḥyâ'* 4, p. 118, 16ff. he explicitly speaks of atoms (*juz'*) in a routine explanation. Concerning the description of two conjoined atoms as a body (*jism*), see R. Frank, "Bodies and Atoms, the Ash'arite Analysis" (in *Islamic Theology and Philosophy: Studies in Honor of George F. Hourani*, ed. M. Marmura, Albany, 1984), pp. 39ff. (where note that the phrase 'are formally strict' has been dropped following 'two predicates' on p. 49, line 2).

[39] «It is inconceivable that the will be aroused except by the judgement of the sense or of the imagination or by a decisive judgement of the mind» (*ibid.*, p. 249, 5f.). On the determination of the volition by sense or by mind, see also *ibid.*, pp. 108f. and on the identification of the functioning of the power to act with animal spirit, see ibid., pp. 111f. and below. For this use of '*inba'atha, yanba'ithu*', cp., e.g., *de Anima*, pp. 182f. and 194f. In the present context the expression implies the operation of a determinant, efficient cause; speaking of the kinds of "moving causes" al-Ghazâlî uses it (*Tahâfut*, p. 240, 10ff.) in offering the example of the operation of purely natural forces, «such as nature in the downwards motion of a stone». For '*bâ'ith*' = '*dâ'iyah*' (motivation), cf., e.g., *Tamhîd*, p. 31.4. Al-Ghazâlî, however, uses this word in a strictly causal sense as when he speaks of an *irâdatun bâ'ithah* (*Arba'în*, p. 226, 1 and 15) as a

action (*taṣrifuhâ*) to its object (p. 248, 7),[40] it moves of necessity, «by an overpowering judgement and a decisive command» (*bi-ḥukmin qâhirin wa-amrin jâzim*: p. 244, 13) once the will is resolved (*'inda njizâmi l-mashî'ah*: p. 248, 8f.). The power of acting, in turn «is aroused» by the cognitive act (p. 248, 31); it is «forced to operate» by the volition (p. 249, 14) in submission to «the dominant power of cognition and intelligence» (*taḥta qahri l-'ilmi wal-'aql*: p. 244, 15). Finally, the agent «does [the act] through the power of acting and the volition» (*fa'alahû bil-qudrati wal-irâdah*: p. 248, 25). The movement of the hand «of necessity follows the power of acting» (*lâzimatun ḍarûratan bil-qudrah*: p. 248, 8), «it comes to be (*ḥadathat*) through the volition» (p. 248, 24), is «forced to operate by the power of acting» (p. 249, 15); «the action occurs through the power of acting by necessity» (*al-fi'lu wâqi'un bihâ bil-ḍarûrah*: ibid., p. 165, 18). The power «moves» (*taḥrîk*) the hand which in turn moves the pen (p. 244, 6ff.). Thus it is that «it is God that creates the objects of the servant's power of acting by means of his power of acting (*bi-wâsiṭati qudratihî*) whenever he readies the totality of the causes of its existence (*hayya'a jamî'a asbâbi l-wujûd*) for the object of his power of acting» (*Maqṣad*, p. 145, 10f.).

The problem is, thus, that when he sets himself to explain in what way the "causes" are conditions of their "effects" (e. g., *Ihyâ'* 4, pp. 86f. and 249, 29ff., *Iqtiṣâd*, p. 96f.), al-Ghazâlî consistently turns to a small set of traditional examples, that do not fully cover the entire series of "causes" and "effects" he has cited for illustration. He seems, in fact, deliberately to avoid responding directly to the reader's principal concern. The existence of space and place (*al-ḥayyiz*) is the condition of the existence of the materially extended atom or substrate, the existence of a corporeal body is the material condition of the presence of life[41], life is the condition of the existence of a cognitive act and the cognitive act that of the existence of a volition and motivation, and the power of acting is the condition of any movement that may be properly described as the action or performance of a human agent. The examples are compatible with the wholly traditional formulation of *Ihyâ'* 4, p. 250, 26ff., translated above.

By causation one commonly understands things' acting and being acted upon and this is what normally one hears as implied by '*sabab*' in contexts such as these. It is, moreover, what al-Ghazâlî seems plainly to intend. When, however, he says that he

determinant cause and of volition's "dispatching" the power to its object (*Ihyâ'* 4, p. 248, 10, translated above); cp. *'Arshiyya*, p. 14,6. In *Mi'yâr*, p. 149,6 he describes the Aristotelian final cause as «*al-ghâyatu l-bâ'ithah*».

[40] Essentially the same expression, viz., «. . . *al-irâdatu li-taṣrifa l-qudrata lil-maqdûr*» occurs in *Iqtiṣâd*, p. 107, 13 and «*irâdatun ṣârifatun lil-qudrati ilâ aḥadi l-maqdûrayn*» in *Qudsiyya*, p. 85,9 (= *Ihyâ'* 1, p. 108, 19); cf. also *Arba'în*, p. 226. For the effectiveness of the "decisive volition" (*al-irâdatu l-jâzimah*) in Avicenna, cf. *Ilâhiyyât*, p. 174 (cited in M. Marmura "Efficient Causality in Avicenna" in *Islamic Theology and Philosophy: Studies in Honor of George F. Hourani*, p. 183).

[41] The example, sc., human life in this world, presupposes the presence of the body so that the condition here apparently conforms to the traditional Ash'arite doctrine, according to which God alone is immaterial. As stated in the context, however, the assertion is not inconsistent with al-Ghazâlî's holding that life is also a property of a host of celestial beings that are wholly incorporial.

means 'cause' (*sabab)'* to be understood as equivalent to 'condition' (*shart*), it becomes
apparent that he wishes to understand 'cause' in a very broad sense as whatever con-
tributes to the realisation of an event. This is a common enough meaning for '*sabab*' in
ordinary classical Arabic.[42] Speaking of causes in *Iqtiṣâd* (p. 223) he says:

> From positing the absence of the cause there follows the absence of the effect,
> if the effect have only one cause. If, however, it is conceivable that there be
> another cause, then the denial of the effect follows from the denial of all causes.
> The denial of the effect does not follow absolutely from the denial of any par-
> ticular cause; there follows, rather, the denial of the effect of this cause in
> particular.[43]

Al-Ghazâlî does not explicitly distinguish for us the ways in which one thing may be a
contributing condition of the coming to be of another and consequently his explanation
is, if not strictly equivocal, at least so vague as to give the appearance of avoiding the
issue. The existence of the body is not the condition of the coming to be of sentient life
nor is the presence of life in the body the condition of the coming to be of cognition or
belief in the same way that the particular cognitive apperception or belief is the condi-
tion of the coming to be of the volition that is consequent upon it and in which the
particular volition, through the activation of the power to act, is the cause of the realisa-
tion of the movement which is its object nor, finally, in the same way in which the
movement of the hand is the cause of the movement of the pen. As conditions of the
existence of their consequents, the latter differ from the former in that they effectively
fulfill the conditions of the coming to be of their consequents and do so in such a way as
to bring its occurrence about immediately. This is what al-Ghazâlî means when he says
that God creates the objects of the human agent's power of acting by means of his
power of acting whenever all of the causes of its existence are properly disposed. The
consequents of these immediately effective causes are in themselves merely possible
and since their existence is, therefore, not necessary in itself, they cannot exist prior to
the fulfilment of the conditions of their existence. They have to have a cause in order to
exist, «something that renders their existence rather than their non-existence necessary
(*murajjiḥun li-wujûdihî ʿalâ ʿadamihî*) so that their non-existence comes to be sup-
planted by existence».[44] It is thus that in the beginning of *al-Iqtiṣâd* (p. 26, 1) al-Ghazâlî

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[42] In its fundamental sense the word is not really equivalent to English 'cause'. It is a rope, bond,
tie and thus «anything by which something is [or may be] reached/attained/accomplished» (*al-
ḥablu wa-kullu mâ yutawaṣṣalu bihî ilâ ghayrihî*: al-Jawharî, s. v. and *Dîwân al-adab* 3, p. 39 b).
It is used broadly in literary Arabic and also by the *mutakallimîn*, albeit their use of it as a formal
expression for "cause" is narrower than that of the *falâsifa*.

[43] With this cp. the definition of condition given by al-Juwaynî: «*mâ lâ yûjibu thubûta mashrûṭihî,
walâkin yamtaniʿu l-mashrûṭu bi-ntifâ'ihi ʿalâ l-wajhi l-ladhî ntaṣaba sharṭan*» (*Shâmil* (69),
p. 708, cited in *Ghunya*, fol. 59r, 1 ff., q. v. f.); the definition follows one given by al-Bâqillânî
(cited in *Shâmil* (69), p. 110, 18 f.).

[44] In ordinary classical Arabic, the verb '*rajaḥa, yarjiḥu, rujḥânan*' means basically to be weighty,
heavy or grave, to be preponderant (as one side of a balance) and, with the preposition "*ʿalâ*', to
outweigh (cf. Ibn Fâris and *Dîwân al-adab*, s. v.). Avicenna uses the factitive, '*rajjaḥa, yuraj-*

says that «by 'cause' (*sabab*) we mean *murajjih* and nothing else». The conception and the language are those of Avicenna.

Al-Ghazâlî's adjustments in how he speaks of causation and of causes according to the context are to be noted. In the beginning of *al-Iqtisâd*, where he wishes to prove the existence of the Creator as the cause (*sabab*) of the existence of the universe, he explains what it is for something to be possibly existent and explains what he means by cause in terms of "rendering [one of two alternative possibilities] necessary" (*al-tarjîh*). Later, however, when he comes to deal with secondary causes and the voluntary actions of men (pp. 96ff. and 222ff.), he no longer describes and explains the relationship of causes to their effects as that of the *murajjih* to that whose existence it effects, but talks vaguely of conditions and of things whose being is conditional. This same rhetorical strategy is followed in the passages of *Ihyâ'* 4 we have looked at. There, al-Ghazâlî gives examples of efficient causes in the occurrence of voluntary human actions but then avoids the issue of the effective operation the secondary causes he cites by speaking vaguely of their being conditions of the existence of their effects. There remain a number of places, however, where he seems more clearly to follow traditional Ash'arite teaching and to imply, if not to say outright, that one contingent entity or event is never the immediately determinant (or efficient) cause of the being of another. Since these passages tend to provoke confusion, it were perhaps advisable to examine several of them in detail.

Of simple causal sequences, as, for example, where the momentum of one moving object is transferred to another, causing it to move in turn, the Mu'tazila commonly employ the verbs '*wallada, yuwallidu*' (to generate, produce) and '*tawallada, yatawalladu*' (to be generated, produced). This al-Ghazâlî rejects explicitly in several places. We have already seen that in *Ihyâ'* (4, p. 249, 24ff.) he rejects the formulation that «the cognition generates (*wallada*) the volition and the volition generates [the activation of] the power to act and the power to act generates the motion and that every consequent comes to be from the antecedent» (*hadatha mina l-mutaqaddim*) on the grounds that to say this is to say that there are things that «come to be not from the Power of God». His thesis there is that the example illustrates not productive causes, but rather conditions (*shurût*). Stating that the adequate comprehension of this is not accessible to ordinary people, but only to the élite, who have the benefit of contemplative vision (*al-mukâshafah*), he offers but two examples of what he means, both of them quite unsatisfactory. The first of these is the classical one we have already considered, viz., that life is the condition of cognition. The second is a juridical one, viz., the fulfilment of the formal conditions of valid ablution. The latter is interesting in that it does strictly address the question of the fulfilment of conditions, but is of a peculiar sort in that,

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jihu, tarjîhan' of that which determines the merely possible with respect to its being or not being, i.e., which necessitates the realisation of one rather than the other of alternatives that in and of themselves are mere possibilities (cf., e.g., *Ishârât*, p. 153, 10 and '*Arshiyya*, p. 14, 7f.). The expression '*murajjih*' occurs in a quite traditional *kalâm* context in *Ikhtisâr* (fol. 91r°, 3-5), where, in arguing that God wills, he speaks of the need of contingent beings for a *murajjih* in order to determine their coming to be to particular times, etc., substituting '*murajjih*' of Avicenna's lexicon for the more traditional '*mukhassis*'.

albeit there is a formal change of state whose occurrence may be looked upon as a sort of event, there is no material alteration in the state of the subject as the coming to be of an accident (i.e., of an entity according to the analysis of the traditional kalâm); ontologically speaking, there is no real change of state, but only an alteration of status. The rhetoric of the passage is worth noting, as he rejects the notion of cognition's «generating the volition» and of one thing's «coming to be from» another, i.e., as, in some special sense, coming to be from within (from inside) it. By this essentially dialectical, not to say sophistical, procedure, he not only sidesteps the formal sense of '*tawallada*', but also the apparent implications of the expressions, 'arousing', 'forcing to operate', 'moving', &c., that he had himself employed earlier in the same chapter. The same basic dialectical moves are found in *Iqtiṣâd* (pp. 95f.), where, ostensibly against the Muʿtazila, he rejects the thesis that most of the events that occur in the world are generated, «some of them being generated of necessity from others» (*yatawalladu baʿ-ḍuhâ min baʿḍin bil-ḍarûrah*), insisting on the absurdity of the idea of one event's issuing from within another and stating that events that are said to be related as efficient cause and effect are in fact related either (a) by a conjunction (*bi-qtirân*) or (b) as condition and what is conditioned by it. The examples given here of what al-Ghazâlî takes to be conjunctions, i.e., events that are consistently associated «*bi-ḥukmi ṭardi l-ʿâdah*», are cotton's being burned given the proximity of fire (treated also in *Tahâfut*, on which see below), the presence of cold in the hand on contact with snow, etc. His assertion that the "conjoined" events he mentions do not follow the one upon the other by a necessity such that it is, in all cases, impossible that the antecedent occur without the usual consequent does not mean that he thinks either that the antecedent is not the cause when the usual consequent follows or that God omit the effect without there being an antecedent, secondary cause of its non-occurrence when it does not, as in the case of a miracle. With 'conjunction' here we see once again an example of his use of an expression that because of its vagueness tends to blur the lines of demarcation between what he actually asserts and what he does not mean to assert. The *Iqtiṣâd* is a formal *kalâm* compendium and against the "Muʿtazilite" doctrine of *tawlîd* al-Ghazâlî introduces as an example of allegedly generated action the motion that takes place in water when some one moves his hand in it. The movement of the water, he says (pp. 96f.), is the condition of the movement of the hand, since two bodies cannot simultaneously occupy one and the same place; if the water were not displaced, there would be no unoccupied space (*ḥayyiz*) into which the hand could move. In effect, God creates the movement of the hand and of the water.[45] The passage is very cleverly conceived and written. The Muʿtazilite thesis that he is genuinely opposed to and means formally to reject is that the human agent autonomously and solely by his own power to act is the initial efficient cause of the occurrence of an event which is the productive or efficient cause of another event, either immediately or through a sequence of events that are related to one another as cause and effect This he expressly denies by saying that God creates both the displacement of the water and the movement of the hand. The basic

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[45] The same example is raised in *Tahâfut*, where his argument that the human agent is not the cause of the movement of the water (p. 109, 3f.) hinges on a cavil concerning the meaning of '*faʿl*'.

concept of *tawlîd*, however, viz., that one event is mover or efficient cause of another, is not addressed, for he does not raise the question of whether or not God causes the displacement of the water by means of the motion of the hand. Because of the way the argument is stated, the passage may give the inattentive reader the impression that al-Ghazâlî follows the traditinal Ash'arite teaching. Neither here nor in *Ihyâ'*, however, does he offer any argument that, carefully analysed, can be understood to be formally directed against the kind of secondary causation that is formally referred to by '*tawlîd*'. Once again, also, he has employed a concept of condition that is broad enough to allow him to dodge the question of efficient causality. His apparent claim of rejecting the formal sense of the expression '*tawallada, yatawalladu*', moreover, is somewhat specious, since in a number of places he uses the verb himself in precisely the sense he here pretends to reject. In speaking of the heavenly bodies, the celestial spheres, etc., he says (*Maqṣad*, p. 101, 5 = *Arba'în*, p. 16, 8), for example, that «they must have motion and the motion must be according to measure in order that what is generated from it be in measure» (*lâ budda min taqaddurihâ li-yataqaddara mâ yatawalladu minhâ*).[46] In a number of places he plainly assumes the causal operation (i. e., the *tawlîd*) of natural causes, as the wind comes up and moves (*harraka*) a ship. Such causal sequences, he says, cannot be infinite, however; «the wind is air and air does not move of itself so long as no mover moves it and so in turn its mover and so on until one comes finally to the first mover, Who has no mover and in Himself does not move» (Ihyâ' 4, p. 242, 14).[47] This assertion al-Ghazâlî makes in his own voice and without qualification.

3.1.2. Ambivalences of Expression

This would seem to resolve the difficulty of al-Ghazâlî's apparent equivocations, were there not a number of other places where, in dealing with human agency as such, he employs traditional Ash'arite formulations in such a way that may give the impression that he follows the school's traditional, occasionalist doctrine. In some cases it is

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[46] Cf. also *ibid* p. 100, 5 (=*Arba'în*, p. 15, 4f., where the term is used of the mechanical operation of a water-clock) and *Qisṭâs*, p. 24, 4. and cp. the expression «*idhâ jarâ sababun yukhrijuhâ ilâ l-wujûd*» (*Ihyâ'* 1, p. 86, 12). Superficially the connotations of '*tawallada*' appear to be different in *Ihyâ* 3, p. 359, 22f., where he says «Conceit motivates one to pride since it is one of its causes (*ahadu asbâbihî*), just as we have mentioned; pride is produced by conceit and from pride the many defects (*fa-yatawalladu mina l-'ujbi l-kibru wa-mina l-kibri l-âfâtu l-kathîrah*) . . .». Here al-Ghazâlî may simply be following a usage that is fairly common amongst the sufis (cf., e.g., the citation of al-Junayd in *Risâla* 3, p. 150), but in the context of his universal determinism it is not implausible that he means to use the word in the formal sense of efficient causation. In the previously cited texts, in any case, the word is unquestionably employed as a formal expression. Though not frequently, the word is also used by Avicenna, e. g., *Ilâhiyyât*, p. 359, 16 (= *Najâh*, p. 247).

[47] Cp. *Arba'în*, pp. 240f., where natural phenomena (here plants from rain, rain from clouds, &c.) being *musakhkharah* point unambiguously to "the First", though he adds that the apparent choices of men present a difficulty.

immediately evident that the traditional language is so used in the context that it doesn't need to be read as it would in the context of a classical *kalâm* work, as when he says «Your action is a gift of God and in that you are its locus He praises you» (*Ihyâ'* 4, p. 86, 26). So too where he says that an agent is said to choose «because he is the locus of an act of choosing».[48] More problematic, however, are statements such as the following. (1) «What it means for a man to be an agent (*fâ'il*) is that he is the locus in which God created the power to act after He has created the volition» (*ba'da an khalaqa fîhi l-irâdah: Ihyâ'* 4, p. 250, 27);[49] and (2) that we know by the experience of our own interior states the distinction between our voluntary actions and materially similar events that we simply undergo (e. g., our shaking involuntarily because of an illness) and that we use the term 'power to act' to express the distinction, «as in the one case the movement is made to exist along with the power to do it (*îjâdu l-ḥarakati ma'a l-qudrati 'alayhâ*) and in the other case without it» (*Tahâfut*, pp. 295 f.).[50]

Here al-Ghazâlî appears to assert as his own three traditional Ash'arite theses: (a) that there is no will in the sense of a faculty or power that belongs continuously to the agent, but rather that each act of willing or volition is a discrete event or "accident" that God creates immediately in a part of the corporeal subject which is the agent. The sentence is ambivalent, however, in that '*irâdah*' lexically may mean either the will, as a power or faculty belonging to the human individual or the single volition as an act of willing. The formulation, however, so evokes traditional Ash'arite contexts that one is drawn to hear their doctrine as the intention of the statement. Likewise he gives here the impression of asserting (b) that the power to act (*al-qudrah*) is not a faculty or something that is there, already in the agent, prior to his acting either, but rather is a discrete "attribute" or "accident" particular instances of which are created immediately by God in the agent simultaneously with the creation of the event which is related to it as its "object". He seems, then, to assert (c) that the human agent's power of acting has no concrete, causal effect (*ta'thîr*), i. e., that it is not the immediate efficient cause of the event but rather is a kind of "accident" which God creates simultaneously with the event which is its object and to which it is related somewhat as a cognition is related to

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[48] E. g., *Ihyâ'* 4, p. 249, 16.: *ma'nâ kawnihî mukhtâran annahû mahallun li-irâdatin hadathat fîhi jabran ba'da hukmi l-'aql*; cf. also ibid, p. 248, 7 ff. and p. 250, 26 ff., translated above. Note that, in contrast to earlier Ash'arite theologians, al-Ghazâlî employs such expressions as '*ijbâr*' and '*idtirâr*' and '*qahr*' without hesitation (e. g., *Maqṣad*, p. 78, 12 f., *Ihyâ'* 4, p. 93, 30 and pp. 248 f. and see Gimaret, *Théories*, pp. 120 ff.). The avoidance of these expressions by earlier Ash'arites, however, is purely formal (cf., e. g., *Luma'* (J), pp. 153 f. and 165).

[49] For al-Ghazâlî's association of volition with actions that occur through our power of acting, cf., e. g., *Ihyâ'* 4, p. 165, 16 ff., cited above *et alibi pass*. Traditionally the Ash'arites distinguish between voluntary actions which are correlated to a power of acting and therefore are properly speaking ours and involuntary movements, etc., which are not our actions (cf., e. g., *Mujarrad*, p. 119, 9 ff. and p. 131, 10 ff.), but unlike al-Ghazâlî they do not hold that either the volition or the power have any causal effect (*ta'thîr*) on the occurrence of the event which is the act (cf. generally R. Frank, "Moral Obligation in Classical Islamic Theology", *Journal of Religious Ethics* 11 (1983), pp. 210 ff. and "Two Islamic Views of Human Agency" in *La Notion de liberté au moyen âge*, ed. G. Makdisi and D. Sourdel, Paris, 1985, pp. 42 ff.

[50] So also in *Iqtiṣâd*, p. 181, 11, using the traditional formula, he says that the human agent has no *qudrah* prior to the act. Much the same argument is set forth *ibid*, pp. 91 f.

its object.[51] In contrast to what he seems to imply in these two passages, al-Ghazâlî speaks of mind, will, and the power to act in the passages of *Ihyâ'* we examined earlier quite plainly as faculties or powers that are ordered one to another in such a way that the act of the higher may cause or elicit that of the next. He in fact considers the power to act to be, along with sensation, perception, etc., a fundamental property of human life. He speaks (*Ihyâ'* 4, p. 112) explicitly of the «powers of sense and of perception and of movement, etc.» and says as well that «sensations and *qudar* and volitions are supplied by» the material spirit that is the principle of life.[52] The principal difficulty presented by these two passages arises from the way in which the word '*al-qudrah*' is most frequently used in the common, sunnî theological literature prior to al-Ghazâlî, viz., that it does not usually show the ambivalence we noted for '*al-irâdah*'. That is to say, the Mu'tazila, who consider the power of acting to be a kind of faculty that is permanently at the disposal of the human agent (an accident which "abides" and is there "prior to the act"), do not employ the word for the separate instances of the actuation or exercise of the power. In the Ash'arite usage, on the other hand, the word is used only of discrete instances of an "accident"; they deny that the power of acting is an attribute that the agent has prior to his performing the act, holding it to be an accident, rather, that exists only in discrete instances as God creates each *qudrah* in the human agent at the same instant in which He creates its object. Once we recognize, however, (1) that al-Ghazâlî holds that God creates the human agent's act instrumentally through his power of acting (e.g., *Maqsad*, p. 145, 10f.) and (2) that, as is evident enough, he considers the "power to act" to be a primary principle of corporeal life and so employs '*al-qudrah*' to name a basic power or faculty of the human agent as such and, (3) that he sometimes employs the word to refer to the individual instances of its activation of this power or faculty as such,[53] then the difficulty is done away with. Neither the first (a) nor

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[51] Cp., e. g, *Irshâd*, p. 210, 3-6 and al-Mutawallî, p. 37, 12ff. Because, however, the power to act comes to exist in the subject simultaneously with the event that is its object, the event has the status of being the action or performance of the subject rather than simply something he undergoes. Thus it is according to al-Bâqillânî's analysis, that while the created power to act does not cause or produce the existence of its object (sc., the occurrence of the event), it does have an effect on the event insofar as it determines its status with respect to the human agent.

[52] Note also that he speaks of «the spirit [= soul] and the perceptive and the motive powers» in *Tahâfut*, p. 279. The metaphor of *Ihyâ'* 4, p. 243f. is quite clearly based on this assumption, as the will says (p. 244, 12ff.) «I didn't get up of myself but was gotten up; I didn't arise but was aroused by an overpowering judgement and a decisive command; I had been at rest prior to its arrival» (... *kuntu sâkinatan qabla majî'ihî*) and the power of acting (p. 244, 7f.), and the power, «I was at rest and sleeping such a sleep that some might think I was dead or non-existent» but the will «got me up and forced me to move». Thus with regard to various of the normal psychological responses of men as founded in God's "custom" (*Ihyâ'* 4, 289, 26f.) he states nonetheless clearly that they are part of a natural disposition that belongs to man's nature (*gharîzatun fî l-tibâ'*).

[53] We have already seen unambivalent instances of al-Ghazâlî's use of the word '*qudrah*' in both senses, i. e., for (1) the facultative power to act (see the previous note and also *Ihyâ'* 4, pp. 111f. and p. 248, 25 cited earlier) and for (2) the act or activation of the faculty (*Ihyâ'* 4, p. 248, 8 and p. 249, 15, cited above); the latter sense is unambiguously clear wherever he uses the plural, '*al-qudar*', e. g., *Ihyâ'* 4, 112, cited in the preceding note. The activation of the power takes place as

the second thesis (b) is either stated or asserted in *Ihyâ'* 4, p. 250 or in *Tahâfut*, pp. 295 f. and the third (c) only seems to be implied because the language evokes that of the traditional Ash'arite manuals. He exploits the analogous ambivalence of '*irâdah*', which may mean either the will as a faculty or the volition that is the particular instance of its activity in the same way.

Again, in *Iqtiṣâd* (p. 92, 8 ff.) al-Ghazâlî rejects, ostensibly against the Mu'tazila, the notion that «the relationship between the power to act and its object makes sense only with regard to causing an effect, causing existence, and the realisation of the object through it» (*min ḥaythu l-ta'thîri wal-îjâdi wa-ḥuṣûli l-maqdûri bihî*). He takes care, however, to restate the thesis (p. 93, 1 ff.) as one that asserts that the *only* relationship that obtains between the agent and his act is that of its occurrence *through* his power of action and goes on to note that the relationships of volition and of cognition to his act are thus excluded. As part of his argument against the thesis, then, he raises the common Mu'tazilite doctrine that the power to act "is continuously present" (*tabqâ*), i.e., that as a power of the human agent it is already present for him prior to any given action that it is employed to perform. In the formal context of a reply to an objection, the statement «the [human] power of acting, in your view, is continuously present» may give the unwary reader the impression that al-Ghazâlî will deny the power's continual presence and availability to the agent as an element of the Mu'tazilite doctrine he is ostensibly refuting and by association, consequently, that he holds, and means to assert, the traditional Ash'arite position that each instance of the power to act is created and exists only at the discrete instant in which the action is created which its unique object. Again here, however, al-Ghazâlî in no way denies that the power of acting is a faculty whose individual acts are, in each case, caused by the antecedent act of another faculty, i.e., that God causes the act instrumentally through that of another faculty. His language is traditional, but when closely read and analysed, proves to lack any formal commitment to the traditional Ash'arite teaching concerning the topic under discussion. In the immediately preceding passage (*al-Iqtiṣâd*, p. 90 ff.), where he argues for the traditional thesis that an act can occur as the object of two powers of acting,[54] viz., God's and the human agent's, he follows the traditional formulations in insisting that the human agent's power is not a power to create (*ikhtirâ'*), but does not go on either to assert that it has no effect (*ta'thîr*) or to deny that God creates through it explicitly. The passage is troublesome, however, in that he seems to say explicitly that the human agent's act does not occur through his power of acting. In concluding the section he says, «The one whose power is general (*wâsi'*) has the power to create the [human agent's] power and its object[55] together, and since the names 'the creator' and 'the one who creates' (*al-khâliqu wal-mukhtari'*) are predicated of the one who causes the thing

the result of antecedent causes (apperception and volition) whose operation in the particular instance is the ultimate effect of God's primeval accomplishment (*al-qaḍâ'*).

[54] «*Maqdûrun bayna qudratayn*»; the expression is traditional in the Ash'arite writings and in the Mu'tazilite counterarguments. The traditional understanding of the expression is that only one of the two powers, sc., God's, has a causal effect on the material occurrence of the event, while the other determines the status of the event as the agent's performance. Cf., e.g., *Mujarrad*, p. 92, 20 f.

[55] Reading *mqdwr* for the *mqd'r* at the beginning of line 3 of the printed text. No variant is

to exist by his own power and both the [human] power and its object are through the power of God, He is called 'creator' (*khâliq, mukhtari*'). The object is not through the servant's power even though it is with it (*lam yakuni l-maqdûru bi-qudrati l-'abdi wa-in kâna ma'ahû*) and so he is called neither 'creator' nor 'one who creates'». And he goes on to explain that this is why, following the terminology of the revelation, a human action as such is termed a 'performance' (*kasb*). The passage is peculiar, however, in that the '-*hu*' of '*ma'ahû*' (the 'it' of 'with it'), which by the testimony of the manuscripts is plainly the preferred reading, cannot refer to 'power' and so has no apparent antecedent. One notes also that in a corresponding passage of *Tahâfut* (p. 295 f., cited above) he avoids saying that the act does not occur through the agent's power and that subsequently in *Iqtisâd* (pp. 96 f.) he avoids the basic issue of *tawlîd*, speaking of "conditions", as he does in *Mi'yâr* and *Ihyâ*'. We have already noted the ambivalence of the immediately ensuing discussion (pp. 92 f.) in which he opposed a conception of human power that would exclude the function of volition and cognition and it is most likely that the formal intention of his denial that «the object is through the servant's power» is directed precisely against such a conception. Later on, in another context, (p. 107, 33) he says that «the volition directs the power to its object». Again, the same insistence on the predication of 'creator' (*mukhtari', mûjid*) uniquely of God is found in *Ihyâ*' (4, p. 250, 26 ff., translated above) in a context where he speaks plainly of the determinant function of secondary causes. More importantly, however, there is nothing in *Iqtisâd* to indicate that al-Ghazâlî subscribes to traditional Ash'arite occasionalism; nowhere, either there or in any of his other works, does he ever make a statement such as that of his master, al-Juwaynî, where he says (*Irshâd*, p. 210, 3 ff.) that «the created power has no effect whatsoever on its object» and, like al-Mutawallî (p. 37, 14), goes on to compare its relation to its object to that of cognition to its object.[56]

indicated in the apparatus, but *miqdâr* makes no sense and *maqdûr* is the reading of the edition of M. M. abûl-'Alâ (Cairo, 1972, p. 84).

[56] Abrahamov takes it that al-Ghazâlî had likely «changed his mind in *Ihyâ*' (which was written after *K. al-Iktisâd*), but perferred to conceal his true doctrine by contradicting himself» (*op. cit.*, p. 91) and goes on to cite Strauss' exegesis of Maimonides as support for his own claim of inconsistency on the part of al-Ghazâlî. If, indeed, he did change his mind on the matter, then obviously there is no question of his concealing his true doctrine. The thesis proposed (quoting Strauss referring specifically to Maimonides, *ibid.* p. 93), viz., that it has been common practice, not to say received tradition, amongst serious philosophers and thinkers, that one put forth as in his own voice propositions and theses that as stated are literally and formally contrary to what he in fact believes to be true and that where such "contradictory statements" are found the author's proper belief is less frequently asserted than its contrary, enjoys almost unqualified favor amongst the disciples of Prof. Strauss. It is manifest, however, that exegetical suppositions of this sort, being better adapted to display the preoccupations and intentions of the interpreter than of the work under examination, tend, in their application, to do consistent violence to the integrity of the author's text and of his thought. However convenient they may prove to be for the deconstruction of historical texts according to one's own fancy, that is to say, they don't make for very good history. Al-Ghazâlî, as we shall see, does practice the "withholding of knowledge" from those who are presumed incapable of assimilating it. In order to do this, however, he will not assert propositions that are formally contrary to what he holds to be true. Indeed, it is precisely because he is consistent in what he in fact asserts and what he denies that

If there is a problem in this passage of *Iqtiṣâd*, there is none in *Qudsiyya*, another doctrinal summary of traditional form written a little over a year later. There (pp. 87f. = *Ihyâ'* 1, p. 110, 13 ff.) too al-Ghazâlî employs vague formulations of the kind we have seen in such a way as to give the impression of asserting traditional teaching without actually doing so. Here we read,

> The Second Thesis: That God alone creates (*ikhtaraʿa*) the movements of men does not mean that they are not subject to men's power of action as being performances (*iktisâb*). On the contrary, God creates (*khalaqa*) both the power and its object and He creates both the choice and the thing chosen. The power to act is an attribute of the individual and a creation of the Lord's, but is not a performance (*kasb*) of His. The movement is a creation of the Lord's and is an attribute of the servant and is a performance of his (*kasbun lahû*), since it was created as the realised object of a power to act which is his attribute (*maq-dûratan bi-qudratin hiya waṣfuhû*) and so the motion has a relationship to another attribute which is called a 'power to act' (qudrah) and with respect to this relationship is called 'a performance' (*kasb*). . .; it is the realised object of God's power in its being a creation and of the servant's power in respect to another kind of relationship which is referred to by 'performance'.[57]

Here he uses much of the traditional language of the Ashʿarite manuals in order to make several assertions. These are (1) that the voluntary actions of human agents occur as the objects of two agents' powers of acting, sc., God's and the human agent's, (2) that, as the realised object of God's Power such an act is a creation (*ikhtirâ'*) and as the realised object of the human agent's power is a "performance" (*kasb, iktisâb*),[58] (3) that God creates the human agent's power of acting, but His creation of it is, by definition, not a "performance", (4) the action, however, is a creation of God's and is also a performance of the human agent, since it occurs as the correlated object of a power of action which is the agent's attribute. In sum, then, (5) the human action is related to «another power of acting», i.e., other than God's, by virtue of which relation it is

the reader who is philosophically acute may easily discern and understand the true orientation and content of al-Ghazâlî's thought. It may be noted in this connection that whereas al-Juway-nî's inconsistency in what he has to say about secondary causality is noted by his student, al-Anṣârî (see n. 60 below), al-Ghazâlî's successors, quite rightly, find no such problem in the corpus of his writing.

[57] Cf. also *Arbaʿîn*, pp. 12f. where there the formulation is that of Ashʿarite orthodoxy, even though it cannot be interpreted so when read within the context of the ensuing section.

[58] So also *Iqtiṣâd*, p. 92, 5f. and *Ihyâ'* 4, p. 249, 19f., cited above. Used in this sense, 'kasaba, yaksibu, kasban' and 'iktasaba, yaktasibu, iktisâban' are traditionally understood to be lexical equivalents of "ʿamila, yaʿmalu' (to do, work) (cf., e. g., Muqâtil b. Sulaymân and abû Jaʿfar al-Ṭabarî ad Q 2.79; Sîbawayh gives «taṣarrafa wa-ijtahada» as equivalents, al-Kitâb 1, p. 288, cited by ibn Sîda, s. v.). Al-Ghazâlî notes in several places (e. g., *Iqtiṣâd*, p. 92, 5f. and *Ihyâ'* 4, p. 249, 19f.; cp. n. 36 above) that because 'kasb' and 'iktisâb' are used for men's actions in the Koran they are employed formally in the lexicon of theology to refer to human actions as distinguished from God's action.

termed a "performance". He uses the traditional Ash'arite language in order to draw a set of significant distinctions, but he never reveals exactly how he understands the terms of these distinctions. Because of the way in which all of this is formulated, one tends to presume that he means to assert the traditional theses which the language of the passage evokes. Closer scrutiny of the text, however, makes it clear enough that it is formulated in such a way as neither formally to assert nor directly to imply either (a) that the human power to act is not a permanent faculty of the human agent whose activation is caused by an antecedent act of another faculty or (b) that its operation has no causal effect in bringing about the existence of the act which is its object or (c) that God, as the first cause and creator, does not in effect create the agent's act through the intermediate causation of his power to act.[59]

In short, albeit his language may often reflect that of the traditional Ash'arite manuals, al-Ghazâlî never in fact denies explicitly and unambivalently that alterations of states and the coming to be and passing away of some things are caused immediately by the antecedent operation of other contingent entities, that they occur through, come to be from, and are produced by their causes (*waqa'a bi-asbâbihâ, ḥadatha 'anhâ, ṣadara 'anhâ*). Quite to the contrary, he often says very plainly in his own voice that they do. What he attempts to do in the passages we have examined is to treat the traditional formulations concerning God's creative activity in the world and Avicenna's account of the determinate operation of the orders of secondary causes as they descend from the first cause as two alternative but fundamentally equivalent descriptions of the same phenomena. To accomplish this, however, he reïnterprets the former in terms of the latter and so doing rejects one of the basic tenets of classical Ash'arism, e. g., the radical occasionalism according to which no created entity, whether an atom, a body, or an accident, has any causal effect (*ta'thîr*) on the being of any other.[60] Al-Ghazâlî, it would seem clear, is not trying to mask or hide what he really holds. Even on a cursory reading of the text it is apparent that he does not mean to present traditional Ash'arite doctrine and certainly none of his contemporaries who possessed a serious understanding of the standard school theology could have failed to see that his aim is to adapt the traditional language and formulations to his own, quasi-Avicennian vision of creation.

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[59] Within this context, note the ambivalence of al-Ghazâlî's statement that the motion «is created as the realised object of a power to act which is [the servant's] attribute» (*khuliqat maqdûratan bi-qudratin hiya waṣfuhû*), in which the 'bi-' of 'bi-qudratin' can as well be read as instrumental and so "through [i. e., by means of] a power of action . . ."; and note too the ambivalence of the statement at the end of the section (p. 88, 10 = *Iḥyâ'* 1, p. 110, 22 f.), «*yaẓharu anna ta'alluqa l-qudrati laysa makhṣûṣan bi-ḥuṣûli l-maqdûri bi-hâ*»: the relationship does not consist exclusively in the object's coming to be through it. With regard to this see the discussion of *Iqtiṣâd*, pp. 91 f. above.

[60] It is thus that al-Juwaynî is in fact inconsistent in what he has to say on these subjects in the majority of his works (e. g., in *Irshâd*, p. 210, 2 ff.) and what he says in *R. al-Niẓâmiyya* (e. g., pp. 46 ff.); cf. the remarks to this effect made by al-Ansârî (a student of al-Juwaynî and fellow student of al-Ghazâlî) in *Ghunya*, foll. 120r° and 142v°.

3.2. Celestial Causes and the Universal System

We have seen, then that given the actuality of all the causal conditions for its occurrence an event comes to be inevitably (*lâ mahâlah*) and by necessity (*darûratan*). The examples of causal sequences that we have examined thus far are all of simple changes, excitations of faculties and imparted motions within the sublunary sphere. There are, however, other, ontologically more fundamental kinds of changes and events within the sublunary sphere, events whose efficient causes belong to a different order. The cognition which is the immediate cause of the volition from which movement originates depends conditionally on the presence of a number of things, but the proximate efficient cause is not a physical or material event; i. e., it is not the antecedent action or the antecedent state of a corporeal being.

> God's knowledge of the forms is a cause of the existence of the forms in particular individuals (*al-a'yân*). The forms that exist in particular individuals are a cause of the realisation of the cognitive forms (*husûlu l-suwari l-'ilmiyyah*) in the human mind. . . . By achieving the form within himself (*bi-ktisâbi l-sûrati fî nafsihî*) [the servant] becomes, as it were, one who informs, even if only in a metaphorical sense, since these cognitional forms, in point of fact, come to exist in him (*tahduthu fîhi*) through God's determination and creation (*bi-khalqi llâhi wa-khtirâ'ihî*), not through his own action. Rather, the servant strives to make himself open to the outflow of God's mercy upon him, for God (the Mighty, the Glorious) "does not alter the state of any people until they alter their own state" (*Q* 13.11), wherefore [the Prophet] (God's prayer and peace be upon him) said, "To your Lord in the time allotted to your lives belong diffusions of His mercy; will you not make yourselves open to them?".[61]

The passage is a characteristic example of Al-Ghazâlî's style, in which often a much more elaborate and theoretically formal account of things is presented and asserted than may appear on first reading. Here, the first statement is put plainly enough: the forms that exist in particulars originate in God and, existing in particulars, are one of the causes of our having them as intelligible universals, since they are first presented in perception of particulars.[62] The Koran verse, then, while giving a rhetorically pious

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[61] *Al-Maqsad*, p. 83 (cp. *Qût* 2, pp. 109, 22 ff.). Cf. also *Munqidh*, pp. 86 f., where the same hadîth is cited, and note how the heavy religious language, together with this and the other traditions cited there, are, as in the present passage, to be interpreted allegorically in terms of the operation of the agent intellect, the actual reception of whose action depends on the prerequisite achievement of the required state of receptiveness that is produced by other celestial and terrestrial causes within the universal system. Cf. also *Ihyâ'* 3, p. 18.

[62] Cp. *Maqsad*, p. 92, 10 f. and p. 93, 8 f. Note al-Ghazâlî's phrasing here; he wants to be very exact and so says that God is *a* cause of the forms' existence in particulars and their existence in particulars is *a* cause of our acquiring them. The angel of the Throne, together with a host of lower secondary causes, also causes the forms' existence in particulars and so too the causes of our perception are also causes of our acquisition of them as intelligibles. From the outset the whole conception is a rejection of traditional Ash'arite doctrine, according to which the rela-

tone to the passage, serves primarily as an unambivalent allusion to the fulfiment of all the conditions for the reception of the intelligible form from a celestial intelligence the *falâsifa* call the agent intellect.[63] The conditions of its reception are achieved when one has the correct set of perceptions and, being fully ready (*musta'idd: Ihyâ'* 4, p. 87, 4 ff.), is open to diffusions of God's mercy (*nafahâtun min rahmatihî*), i. e., to the outflow of His superabundance (*faydânu fadlihî*: e. g., *Ihyâ'* 3, p. 361, 22).[64] In *Mîzân* (p. 49, 15 f.) he says that the intellective faculty (*al-quwwatu l-'aqliyyah*) «receives the true universal cognitions, both those that are given immediately and those that follow logical inference, from the High Council», i. e., from the agent intellect.[65] As in the case of our intellectual apperception of the forms, so also among the causes which eventuate in the movement of the hand, in the example cited above, one of the primary ones, the mind's judgement, was dependent upon the activity of a celestial intermediary.

Similarly in *Tahâfut* (p. 279) he speaks of «the entrance of the spirit[66] and of the perceptive and motive faculties into the animal sperm» and says that life, the senses, etc., come to be in the foetus not from the "natures" (i. e., the four elemental principles, hot, cold, dry, damp), but rather «their existence is through the agency of the First being (*min jihati l-awwal*), either without any intermediary or by the intermediacy of the angels who are entrusted with these contingent things» (*al-malâ'ikatu l-mutawak-kalûna bi-hâdhihi l-umûri l-hâdithah*). Here the definite 'the angels who . . .' indicates

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tionship between the "form's" presence in sense and perception and its presence as a purely mental object (*ma'lûm*) is entirely occasionalistic, the consistent operation of God's *'âdah*; God could create them immediately in perception or mind without creating the sensation of them and without the immediate presence of the object.

[63] Concerning the angel that plays this role, cf., e. g., *Mishkâh*, pp. 51 f. p. 67, 15 f. and p. 80, 6 f. and see below. Note that for al-Ghazâlî the agent intellect is located at the top of the celestial hierarchy, not at the sphere of the moon as with al-Farâbî and Avicenna.

[64] The "readiness" (*isti'dâd*) is clearly implied in the citation of Q 13.11 (which is also cited in *Qût* 2, p. 109, 27 ff., where God is referred to as *musabbibu l-asbâb*); cf. also *Mi'yâr*, p. 106 (discussed by Marmura, "Ghazâlî and Demonstrative Reasoning", p. 194), *Mishkâh*, pp. 80 f. and *Ihyâ'* 4, p. 87, where the *isti'dâd* as condition and its link to the "chain of causes" is indicated somewhat explicitly. With this cp. *al-Nafs al-nâtiqah*, p. 198 where Avicenna speaks of «the intellectual substance (*al-jawharu l-'aqlî*) through which occurs the divine outflow (*al-faydu l-ilâhî*) and which is called an angel in the language of the revelation and an agent intellect in the language of philosophy»; in *Mâhiyyah*, p. 29, 5 he speaks of «*al-malaku l-wahhâb*». Thus al-Ghazâlî says «a single thing may have many names in differing respects and so be called an intellect with respect to its essence and an angel with respect to its relationship to God . . .» (*Faysal*, p. 41).

[65] The expression "the High Council" (*al-mala' al-a'lâ*), here used to designate the agent intellect, is taken from Q 38.69 (cf. also 37.8); it is normally understood by the exegetes to refer to the celestial angels (or to «a group of angels in the highest heaven»: *Latâ'if, ad loc.*). Concerning al-Ghazâlî's names for the agent intellect, see below.

[66] By 'spirit' here he means the "vapor" that is the principle of coporeal life and of the operations of the animal body and its powers, sc., «sensations, activations of the power to act (*qudar*), volitions, etc.»; concerning its nature and function see *Ihyâ'* 4, p. 111 f., where he refers to it as a "lamp".

that of the two alternatives it is the latter which is the case in this instance.[67] Once again the statement appears to be somewhat noncommittal, as he seems to remain within the bounds of traditional orthodoxy. Read, however, in the context of the examples of causal conditions and their effects that we have seen, the implications of the present passage will be that while the presence of the material body (*jism, jawhar: Ihyâ'* 4, pp. 86f. and *Iqtiṣâd*, p. 97, cited above) is the most basic, general condition for the existence of a living being, there are other, more particular conditions; given the fulfilment of all the prerequisite conditions (*jamîʿu l-asbâb: Maqṣad*, p. 145, 11), the angel gives it its form, i.e., gives it actual being as a living instance of a particular kind of animal.[68]

So also where he talks about fire's burning cotton, he describes what takes place as «the creation of black in the cotton and the dispersion of its parts and turning it into a flaming wick (*ḥurâq*) and ashes», and says that the agent (*fâʿil*) of these events «is God, either through the intermediacy of angels or without intermediary; fire, since it is an inanimate being, has no agency (*lâ fiʿla lahâ*)» (*Tahâfut*, pp. 278f.).[69] By mentioning the intermediate activity of angels, he would seem to suggest that the changes that take place here are of such a kind as to involve the transmission or imposition of forms. Because of his formal disclaimer of asserting the truth of any particular thesis in *Tahâfut*, the present passage may perhaps not be taken by itself to present unambivalent evidence of al-Ghazâlî's doctrine concerning the intermediate role of celestial intelligences in causing sublunary events, but nothing else is compatible with the consistent meaning of what he says in a large number of places where he does make assertions formally in his own voice. We shall take up the nature of these angelic intermediaries shortly and shall have to ask if their activity (causation) is constant and invariant, operative whenever there is a subject (*maḥall*) that is fully apt (*mustaʿidd*) to receive their influence, or if the program has room for irregularities.

What we have seen here is that in a number of places al-Ghazâlî fails to make his

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[67] Concerning al-Ghazâlî's occasional "either without intermediary or with ...", see the discussion of *Ihyâ'*, 4, 250, 1ff., *infra* and see n. 125. On the role of angels in the development of the fœtus in the womb, cf., e.g., *Tahâfut*, p. 290, 1ff. and *Ihyâ'* 4, 251, 8f. and cp. *Qût* 2, p. 143, 31ff.

[68] So also it is an angel that is responsible for the transformation of water into air (*Maqṣad*, p. 122). Generally concerning the operation and function of the "terrestrial angels", whose numbers are vast, cf. *Ihyâ'* 4, pp. 117f. It is this form which may come to exist in the mind as a universal; note, however, that, for al-Ghazâlî, the angel which is the giver of forms is not that which serves as the agent intellect. It would appear likely, indeed, that al-Ghazâlî may envisage a plurality of angelic agents who serve as "givers of forms".

[69] Again here the argument is in part simply dialectical, given the sense in which he understands 'agent' and 'inanimate' (cf. *ibid.*, pp. 96 and 99); on the other hand, however, since the work is addressed to the *falâsifa* and consistently employs their lexicon, one can hear '*fâʿil*' and '*fiʿl*' as 'efficient cause' and 'efficient causation'. It is to be noted that he states the thesis which he will reject as one according to which «the fire *alone* is the agent/efficient cause of the burning» (p. 278, 10). Within this overall context it is interesting to note that at one point al-Ghazâlî suggests that included among the things that can be causally determinant (*murajjiḥ*) is a conjunction of events in which a prophet needs a miracle (*Tahâfut*, p. 289, 6ff.), a situation whose outcome, as we shall see, is programmed into the system from the outset.

formal conception and theoretical understanding concerning the matter under discussion altogether clear and that in some he seems intentionally to obscure, if not to conceal, his intention and to do so, moreover, in such a way as to mislead the careless or incompetent reader. His reason for doing this, as he states explicitly in a number of places, is because it is not licit «to disclose the secret of God's ordainment publicly» (ifshâ'u sirri l-qadar)[70] and accordingly he says (Iqtiṣâd, pp. 51f.) that the unlearned should not be told the true meaning of "the Merciful mounts the Throne" (Q 20.5) lest it confuse them and upset their faith. His understanding of "mounting the Throne" (Q 20.5) he ultimately spells out in Iljâm (p. 20, translated below). The notion that the highest knowledge should be withheld from those who are unworthy, sc., from those who are incapable of comprehending it properly, was common among the falâsifa as well as among the sufis. As is apparent in the texts we have examined thus far, al-Ghazâlî employs three main devices in order to carry out this obligation. In many places he simply leaves the formal exposition of his doctrine incomplete in one or another respect, omitting a premise or failing to make clear the exact sense or the implication of what he says or by terminating the discussion before he has fully explained his meaning.[71] In some cases he expresses himself in words that are common in Muslim religious discourse but without making clear how he means them to be understood in the immediate context. Often, thus, he employs symbolic or allegorical language; this sometimes takes the form of citations or paraphrases of elements of the Koran or of some ḥadîth, whose interpretation in formally conceptual terms is left up to the reader, while on a number of occasions he presents an allegory or an elaborate image of his own making. At other times, as we have seen, he employs the language and formulations of traditional kalâm in such a way as to give the superficial reader the impression that the doctrine which is presented conforms essentially to that of the school manuals. The language and the formulæ he employs are in many places calculated to suggest that his accounts of events in terms of antecedent causes are alternative to those employed in the manuals, and are fundamentally equivalent to them, though addressing the phenomena of our experience more directly so as to furnish an intellectually more satisfying theological exposition of God's creation and governance of the world. For some readers, this procedure may have the effect of masking the extent of his commitment to the metaphysics of the falâsifa and its implications. Al-Ghazâlî's intention, however, is not one of deceiving any reader, but rather, as he understands it, of offering to each that which he is intellectually capable of receiving with profit and benefit. For

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[70] Cf., e.g., Iḥyâ' 1, pp. 36f. and p. 99, 28ff. and 4, p. 86, 23f., p. 241, 15ff. and p. 243, 11f. where he presents a ḥadîth to authorise the practice and see also ibid. p. 327, 17f. Concerning Avicenna's attitude and practice and its background in the Aristotelian tradition, cf. D. Gutas, op. cit, pp. 225-234 and 299-311. Concerning al-Ghazâlî's conception of the intellectual capacities of men and the distribution of knowledge, see our "al-Ghazâlî on Taqlîd", forthcoming in ZGAIW.

[71] In some places he simply dodges the issue (e.g., Iḥyâ' 4, p. 249, 22-33, esp. 29-33) and in others puts it off with a simple "this ain't the place to go into that" (e.g., Maqṣad, p. 145, 12) or "most people couldn't understand it" (e.g., Mishkâh, p. 91, 12). Note how this contrasts to Avicenna, who explains the system in detail on the same topics (e.g., Ilâhiyyât, pp. 435ff. = Najâh, pp. 299ff.).

those who read the texts carefully and were able to discern what is actually asserted and implied and what is not, his writing was clear enough and manifestly consistent.

As we mentioned earlier, al-Ghazâlî compares the created universe to a water-clock in which, as water escapes from the cylinder, the water level within is gradually lowered thereby pulling a string attached to a float the other end of which tilts a container so as to cause a small ball to fall into a brass dish, marking the hour. The events we have been discussing correspond to the ball's striking the dish. Nothing at this level is permanent and whatever takes place or comes to be does so as the determinate effect of the structure of the machine and the operation of its parts. Sublunary events, in short, result from «instruments, causes, and motions» (*ḥaṣala min âlâtin wa-asbâbin wa-ḥarakât*) and the instruments are the basic elements or principles (*al-uṣûl*) (*Maqṣad*, p. 100, 9f. = *Arbaʿîn*, p. 15, 9f.). The apparatus, that is, and its parts correspond in the metaphore to

> the universal, fundamental, permanent, and stable causes (*al-asbâbu l-kulliyy-atu l-asliyyatu l-thâbitatu l-mustaqirrah*), which are constant and unchanging, such as the earth and the seven heavens, the stars and the spheres and their interrelated movements which are constant and shall neither change nor fail "until the Document shall reach its term" (Q 2.235).[72]

Elsewhere, he includes amongst the things that correspond to the apparatus also the sea and the air and «the [four] natures», sc., hot, dry, cold and damp (*Al-Maqṣad*, p. 101, 8ff. = *Arbaʿîn*, p. 16, 1ff. and *Munqidh*, p. 106, 4). The fundamental and permanent causes, however, are themselves hierarchically ordered. Terrestrial causes are subordinate to celestial causes. Following the metaphore of the water-clock, he says (*Maqṣad*, p. 101, 9-13 = *Arbaʿîn*, p. 16, 13-17),

> The cause that moves the spheres and the stars and the sun and the moon in a predetermined measure (*bi-ḥisâbin maʿlûm*) is like the aperture that causes the water to descend necessarily in a predetermined measure (*bi-qadarin maʿlûm*). The way in which the motion of the sun and the moon and the stars results in the occurrence of events on the earth is analogous to the way the motion of the water results in those motions which terminate in the falling of the ball that makes it known that the hour has elapsed.[73]

[72] *Maqṣad*, p. 98, 9ff. = *Arbaʿîn*, p. 13, 7ff. He lists these instruments and principles as «the heavens, the earth, the seas, the air, and these immense bodies» (*ibid.*, p. 101, 8f.); cf. also *ibid.*, p. 82, 3f. where he speaks of the stars, the earth, water as «immense parts of the world». (There is a longer list in *Arbaʿîn*, pp. 13 and 16). Note the definite, «the instruments which are *the* fundamental beings» (*al-âlâtu l-latî hiya l-uṣûl: Maqṣad*, p. 100, 10 = *Arbaʿîn*, p. 15.11); they are original and originating with respect to all sublunary beings and events. In *Maqṣad*, p. 82,3, he speaks of the organisation of the parts of the universe and the reason for «the stars' being above and the earth's and water's being below and all the other kinds of ordering that are found in the immense parts of the universe» (*fî l-ajzâ'i l-ʿiẓâmi min ajzâ'i l-ʿâlam*). For the purposes of the present study there is no need to pursue his elaboration of the metaphore.

[73] The phrase '*bi-qadarin maʿlûm*' evokes Q 77.22 where the context is that of the creation of the

Here it is not immediately clear exactly what he means to indicate metaphorically by the phrase «the cause that moves the spheres . . .» (al-sababu l-muḥarriku lil-aflâki . . .), nor does he pursue the matter in order to clarify it as he had done for the rest of the apparatus. In order clearly to understand what he means by this we shall have to look briefly at the general classes and ordering of the higher and more fundamental causes and intermediaries.

The world is «every existent other than God» (al-Iqtiṣâd, p. 24) and although al Ghazâlî sometimes, following the traditional Ashʿarite usage, speaks as if the world consists of material entities alone,[74] he in fact holds that there are two distinct domains of created beings.

> The world is two worlds (ʿâlamân), spiritual and corporeal or,. if you wish, sensible and intelligible or, if you wish, higher and lower. This all comes to much the same thing; the differences are merely differences of terminology. When you refer to them as they are in themselves you say 'corporeal' and 'spiritual'; if you refer to them in relation to the eye that perceives them, you say 'sensible' and 'intelligible', and if you refer to them in their relationship to one another you say 'higher' and 'lower'. The latter is often referred to as ʿʿâlamu l-mulki wal-shahâdah' and the former as ʿʿâlamu l-ghaybi wal-malakût' (Mishkâh, p. 65, 13 ff.).

The intelligible world consists of the angels (hum jumlatu ʿâlami l-malakût: Mishkâh, pp. 50 f. and 66 f.), which correspond to the separated intelligences and souls of Avicenna's universe. Each one of them, being unique in its kind and wholly without composition, has its own "station" (maqâm), from which it never departs, and has but a single activity.[75] They are divided into two general classes, according to the domains in which the effect of their acitivity is realised, the terrestrial and celestial, or more properly into

foetus and the child from the sperm. The phrase could be rendered 'in an intelligible measure' (or 'an intelligible ordainment'), for al-Ghazâlî, as we have seen, sometimes uses 'maʿlûm' in this sense and such a connotation is doubtless intended here. I have chosen to render the word by 'determined' here, however, in order to reflect the Koranic allusion.

[74] In Iqtiṣâd (loc. cit.), e. g., he says, «By 'the world' we mean every existent other than God and by 'every existent other than God' we mean all bodies and their accidents». The definition is traditional (e. g., Thaghr, p. 96, al-Mâturîdî, al-Tawḥîd, p. 233), but al-Ghazâlî's conception of bodies and accidents does not correspond fully to that of his predecessors. Exactly how this definition is to be understood within the context of al-Ghazâlî's theology is something that wants working out. It offers no prima facie difficulty in its application to sublunary beings, but how he means to understand 'bodies and accidents' with respect to the celestial realm is not immediately clear. The definition more commonly reads 'jawâhir wal-aʿrâḍ' rather than 'bodies and accidents' (e. g., Tamhîd, § 37, al-Baghdâdî, Uṣûl al-dîn, Istanbul, 1346/1928, p. 33, Irshâd, p. 17, and Shâmil (69), p. 369, Ghunya, fol. 152rº, 8 f.).

[75] Iḥyâ 4, p. 119, 5 ff. Note the expression 'waḥdâniyyu l-ṣifah' (line 5) for 'unique', and the use of Q 37.164. The «one station» is doubtless somewhere in the supraterrestrial realm. (That the roles of some angels is to effect things that take place in the terrestrial realm need not imply that they inhabit the lower world). For allusions to the intelligible world in Maqṣad, see the references in the following note.

three classes, the terrestrial, the celestial, and "the porters of the Throne" (*ḥamalatu l-'arsh) (Iḥyâ'* 4, p. 117, 27 ff.).[76] The material world is entirely governed by the intelligible world; «the sublunary world (*'âlamu l-shahâdah*) is one of the manifest effects (*athar*) of that [celestial] world, having a relationship to it analogous to that of the shadow to a person's body and the fruit to that which produces it, and to the relation of the effect to its cause (*sabab*)» (*Mishkâh*, p. 51, 6-8).[77] The angels who govern terrestrial events are subordinate to those whose governance is celestial and both groups are subordinate to "those who carry the throne" (*Iḥyâ* 4, p. 118, 18 ff.). In the metaphor of the water-clock (*Maqṣad*, p. 100, 5 f.) al-Ghazâlî speaks of the aperture in the apparatus as «the first cause» – i. e., the first within the apparatus – and it is apparently the intellect which is the first of created causes that he refers to metaphorically in *Iḥyâ'* 4, pp. 118 f. as «the porters of the Throne». Concerning the Throne he says in *Iljâm* (p. 20),

> The interpretation of "mounting the Throne" (Q. 20.5) is that He means by this the particular relationship to the throne; the relationship is that God (the Exalted) acts in the entire universe and "disposes the affair from the sky to the earth" (Q 32.5)[78] through the intermediary of the Throne, for no form comes to

[76] In *Maqṣad* al-Ghazâlî does not talk about the celestial spirits or those of the outermost shere explicitly, but they are alluded to in the section in which he treats '*al-'Alî*' (pp. 115 ff.), when he speaks of «*al-rutabu l-ma'qûlah*» (the intelligible grades of being) and of «*al-tadrîjâtu l-'aqliyyah*» (the rankings of things according to their intelligibility) and «*al-darajâtu l-'aqliyyah*» (the intellectual ranks) (p. 115, 16 ff.) that are constituted by the differences between causes and their effects (*al-asbâb* and *al-musabbabât*), since by '*al-darajât*' he alludes to Q 40.15 (*rafî'u l-darajâti dhû l-'arshi yulqî l-rûḥa 'alâ man yashâ'*), which is cited by al-Ḥalîmî under '*al-'Alî*' (al-Bayhaqî, *Asmâ'*, p. 16); cf. also *Arba'în*, p. 4. It is also to be noted that al-Ḥalîmî in discussing "*Dhû l-'arsh*" (al-Bayhaqî, *Asmâ'*, p. 91) suggests all three of al-Ghazâlî's terms, albeit in quite different language. In comparing al-Bayhaqî's and al-Ghazâlî's treatment of this expression, one sees another example of the latter's tendency, in his quest for systematisation and rationalisation, to reduce the richness of implication and connotation with which traditional theology had invested many expression.

[77] «One of the manifest effects», i. e., there are also the material bodies of the stars, the sun, etc. With this see *Mishkâh*, p. 67, 6 ff. and below.

[78] There is a kind of montage here of Koranic citations; i. e., the classical locus for "mounts the throne" (*istawâ 'alâ l-'arsh*) is Q 20.5. The phrase occurs along with "disposes the affair" (*yudabbiru l-amra*) in Q 10.3, while the latter phrase is continued by "from the heaven to the earth" (*mina l-samâ'i ilâ l-ard*) in Q 32.5. Al-Ghazâlî interprets the '*istawâ*' (mounts) of "*al-Raḥmânu 'alâ l-'arshi stawâ*" (Q 20.5), following al-Juwaynî (e. g., *Luma'* (J), pp. 149 f.), as an equivalent of '*istawlâ*' (to dominate, to master); cf., e. g., *Qudsiyya*, p. 83 (= *Iḥyâ'* 1, p. 107), where '*al-istiwâ*' is said to be equivalent to '*al-qahr*' and '*al-istîlâ*', and *Faḍâ'iḥ*, p. 53 and also *Iqtiṣâd*, pp. 55 f., where he gives a laborious justification of this interpretation. Though some Ash'arite theologians take "mounts the Throne" as referring to an essential attribute (sc., God's exaltation above all created things; cf., e. g., *Ta'wîl*, fol. 131v° and *sharḥ al-Irshâd*, foll. 143v° f.), '*al-istiwâ*' in this verse is commonly understood by al-Ash'arî and his school to name an action (something that God does to or in or with respect to the Throne) (e. g., Ibn 'Asâkir, p. 150, *Mushkil*, p. 26 and, al-Shîrâzî, p. 72, §38)); abû Isḥâq al-Isfarâ'înî takes it too as naming an "attribute of action" but one that is a "revealed attribute" (i. e., one whose identity and nature is not rationally knowable) (*Sharḥ al-Irshâd, loc. cit.*). Most of the earlier Ash'arites reject

be in the world without first having come to be in the Throne, just as no inscription or writing comes to be as a form and a word on paper without having first come to be in the brain.

Thus it is that the movements of the heavens and all the forms of all created beings, and therewith the occurrence of every event from the beginning of the world to its end, are already present and determined in the creation of the outermost heaven and its angel. For this reason al-Gazâlî identifies God's universally effective "Accomplishment" (*al-qaḍâ*) with his creation of "the universal, permanent causes", sc., with the apparatus of the metaphore.[79] The Accomplishment is the establishment of the universal causes, God's «laying them down»;[80] it is «the presence of the totality of existent beings in a general way, not in their particulars, in the Cherished Tablet»[81] and therewith the concrete determination of all contingent events in the creation of the first intelligence and its sphere, «the King's right hand in which the heavens are enclosed and in whose grasp are the pens also» (*Iḥyâ*' 4, p. 246, 8ff.). It is from here that all lower causes are directed to their effects (*tawajjah*: cf. *Maqṣad*, p. 98, 7ff. and p. 109, 14f.). Thus al-Ghazâlî places God's creating (*ikhtirâ*) and His causing the existence (*îjâd*) of every contingent entity and of every event that occurs in the world in His creation of the universal, permanent causes, material and immaterial. With their creation and in them the possibility of the existence of every subsequent entity and every particular event becomes a concrete necessity; it is inconceivable that anything be other than as it must be, as «the sequence of causes and effects are linked according to the determination of the Lord of Lords and of Him Who makes the causes to function as causes» (*Iḥyâ*' 4, p. 94, 5f.; cf. also *ibid.*, p. 250, 1ff. cited below). Al-Ghazâlî insists in *Tahâfut* (p. 252, 5ff. and gen-

'*istîlâ*" as an equivalent of '*istiwâ*" (e. g., *ibid.*, al-Ibâna, p. 32, and Ta'wîl, foll. 132r° ff. and Ibn 'Asâkir, *loc. cit.*) against the Mu'tazila, though their interpretations of the expression are not everywhere wholly incompatible with the way al-Ghazâlî understands it.

[79] Thus the sense of '*al-qaḍâ*" is taken from "*qaḍâhunna sab'a samawâtin ...*" (*Q 41.12, cited above*). Where Avicenna describes these universal causes as eternal, al-Ghazâlî terms them "permanent" (*dâ'imah*), since he denies the eternity of the world.

[80] *Al-qaḍâ*' is «*naṣbu l-asbâbi l-kulliyyah*» (*Maqṣad*, p. 98, 10f. cited in *Arba'în*, p. 13), «*waḍ'u l-asbâbi l-kulliyyah*» (*Maqṣad*, p. 102, 6), «*al-waḍ'u l-kulliyyu lil-asbâbi l-dâ'imah*» (ibid., p. 98, 17); cp. *Najâh*, p. 302, 19f. Note the connotations of '*waḍ*" here. The Accomplishment is one and universal (*Iḥyâ*' 4, p. 94, 8f.; note that here the word '*al-amr*' does not mean "the command", but "that thing"). N. b. the parallel with *Ilâhiyyât*, pp. 439f.

[81] «*Al-qaḍâ'u wujûdu jamî'i l-mawjûdâti fî l-lawḥi l-maḥfûẓi ijmâlan lâ tafṣîlan*»: *Arba'în*, p. 11, citing 'Alâ'uddîn (see above n. 27). (With this contrast '*bi-tafâṣîlihâ*' of the citation of *Ghunya*, 24r°, translated below). The Cherished Tablet on which God's creative word is originally "written" (Q 85.22) would seem here to be allegorically identified with the Throne or with the entire celestial world or perhaps with the heavens and the angels that move them. (The Koran will be originally contained in the Cherished Tablet as its primeval material registration in that the text and its eventual revelation to Muhammad was inscribed in the system at its creation along with every other event that flows from God's "Be".); cf. also *Iḥyâ*' 3, pp. 19f. and 4, p. 489,2ff. With this cp. '*Arshiyya*, p. 14, 13f.: «*ummu l-kitâbi huwa ta'alluqu 'ilmihî 'alâ l-wajhi l-'âlî 'ani l-taghayyuri wal-zawâl*» (The Archetype of the Scripture is the relationship of His knowledge [to its created objects] in the universal way which transcends alteration and change).

erally pp. 240 ff.) that knowledge of the nature and operation of the angelic realm is not accessible to unaided reason. His use of names and descriptions taken from the Koran and hadîth to refer to members and classes of celestial beings is not everywhere easy to decipher, assuming that there was some regular allegorical scheme he consistently or generally employs. Following Q 69.17 the porters of the Throne are commonly taken by the commentators to be eight in number. The inference that al-Ghazâlî uses the plural expression 'ḥamalatu l-ʿarsh' in Iḥyâ' 4, pp. 117 f. to indicate a single celestial being, as he apparently refers to the agent intellect as "the High Council" in Mîzân, p. 45, is plausible, but by no means wholly certain. In Fayṣal, p. 41, he cites the hadîth according to which the first thing God created was the intellect (the same hadîth is cited in Miʿyâr, p. 166) and also the one according to which the first thing He created was "the Pen", and goes on to say that «the word 'intellect' here is an expression for the being of an angel (dhâtu malak) which is called an intellect in that it understands things by its own nature and being (yaʿqilu l-ashyâʾa bi-jawharihî wa-dhâtihî) without having to be taught; it is often called a 'pen' with reference to its engraving the fundamental truths (ḥaqâʾiqu l-ʿulûm) on the tablets of the hearts of the prophets and the saints and all the other angels as revelation and inspiration» (cf. also Iḥyâ' 4, p. 245, 10 ff., where Q 96:4 is cited and also Maqṣad, p. 103, 2 ff. and cp. ʿArshiyya, p. 15). The angelic intellect which is nearest to God is called "al-muqarrab" (Mishkâh, p. 53, 13) and is described as «the one who commands that the heavens be moved» (al-âmiru bi-taḥrîkihâ: ibid, pp. 91 f.).[82]

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[82] Note the use of the singular here instead of the usual plural. He says in Tahâfut that the Muqar-rabûn (the angels who are placed near [to God]) and the Cherubim and the Pen are called 'pure intelligences' (ʿuqûlun mujarradah) and 'self-subsistent substances' in the terminology of the falâsifa (pp. 248, 7 and 255, 5 ff. and cf. p. 225, 6 f. and Miʿyâr, p. 165), while they describe the «heavenly angels» (al-malâʾikatu l-samâwiyya) as the souls that move the heavenly spheres (pp. 249, 4 and 255, 4); the "Cherished Tablet" they identify with «the souls of the heavens» (ibid., p. 254). He notes (Mishkâh, p. 91, 1 ff.) that some individuals mistake the mover of the first sphere for God, saying that their reasoning is «. . . that the mover of each heaven is another entity which is called an angel [and] . . . these heavens are contained within another sphere with whose motion the whole is moved one revolution in a day and a night, so that it is the Lord Who is the one who moves the outermost body which contains all the spheres, since multiplicitiy is totally absent from him»; with this cp. Avicenna's Commentary on Lambda, pp. 23 f. As we noted, he speaks in Maqṣad (p. 100, 5 f.) of the aperture in the apparatus as "the first cause" (i. e., the first within the apparatus) of the whole set of movements that take place in the water-clock. It is clear, thus, that while 'the Throne', following common usage, may in some contexts (e. g., Iqtiṣâd, p. 56, 3 f.) refer to the outermost sphere, in others it is to be understood as referring to an angel associated with the outermost sphere. This is made altogether clear in Iljâm, p. 20, translated below. Avicenna, in Aqsâm al-ʿulûm (p. 113, 9 ff.), distinguishes a first rank of angels, the Cherubim, from the lower, «second level spiritual substances . . ., viz., the angels that are entrusted with the heavens, the porters of the Throne, those that direct nature, and those that have charge of the things that are generated in the world of coming to be and passing away»; cf. also the allusion to «the four angels and the bearers of the Throne» in al-Quwâ l-nafsâniyya, p. 177, 20. It should be noted that the association of angels with the indi-vidual heavenly spheres is not peculiar to the falâsifa but is traditional; thus al-Farrâʾ (d. 207/

4. God's "Determination" of what must be

4.1. Wisdom, Judgement, and Command: The Need to Divide and Distinguish

As we saw earlier, the highest and underived level of God's creating (sc., *al-khalq*) al-Ghazâlî identifies as His original Determination (*al-taqdîr*) and ordering; it is «the first, universal ordering» (*al-tadbîru l-awwalu l-kullî*) which is «the origin of the establish-ment of the causes» (*aṣlu waḍʿi l-asbâb: Maqṣad*, p. 100), i.e., of the second level. In order to describe this he employs a number of terms, as we have already seen. We shall now have to examine several of these terms in order to determine what precisely he may mean by them. He identifies this Determination with God's Wisdom (*ḥikmah*) and His Judgement (*ḥukm*). 'Wisdom', al-Ghazâlî says (*al-Iqtiṣâd*, p. 165f.) is employed in two senses:

> The first is the purely intellectual grasp (*al-iḥâṭatu l-mujarradah*) of the arrangement of things (*naẓmu l-umûr*) and of their subtle and important characteristics and the judgement (*al-ḥukm*) of how they must be in order that the end that is sought from them shall be completely realised; the second is that the power to cause the existence of the order and system (*îjâdu l-tartîbi wal-niẓâm*)[83] and to execute it well and expertly be added to this, so that 'wise' (*ḥakîm*) is predicated as from 'wisdom', which is a kind of knowledge and 'wise' is predicated as from 'to execute expertly' (*iḥkâm*), which is a kind of action.[84]

God's ordering and determining, then, is the first of these, an interior ordering, sc., «the judgement of what instruments, causes, and motions there have to be so as to result in the realisation of what should come to realisation» (*ḥuṣûlu mâ yanbaghî an yaḥṣul: Maqṣad*, p. 100, 8f.). Al-Ghazâlî identifies this judgement with God's Com-mand, "Be" ("the primal command": *Maqṣad*, p. 98, 16) and so with His eternal Speak-

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822) interprets the "*wa-awḥâ fî kulli samâʾin amrahâ*" (Q 41.12) as «He placed angels in each heaven, and this is 'its affair'» (*Maʿânî l-Qurʾân*, ad loc.).

[83] Terminologically '*rutbah*' and '*rattaba, yurattibu* ' and '*tarattaba, yatarattabu*' are used of the ordering of things to one another as prior and posterior, primary and secondary, more perfect and less perfect, and as cause and effect, while '*niẓâm*' is used of the general organization or structure, the system as such and as a whole.

[84] With this cp. *Mujarrad*, pp. 48, 6ff. and 97,2ff. For the derivation of '*ḥakîm*' from '*iḥkâm*', cf. also, e. g., *Mushkil*, p. 158 and *Irshâd*, p. 152 and see generally Gimaret, *Noms divins*, pp. 271f. In *Mîzân*, p. 49, where al-Ghazâlî follows the Aristotelian listing of the four cardinal virtues, 'wisdom' (*al-ḥikmah*) stands first, in the place of prudence.

ing (*kalâmuhû*).[85] Judgement, for al-Ghazâlî, is a knowing or apperception and he identifies God's Speaking with His knowledge.[86]

In *Maqṣad* while describing the perfection of the universe, al-Ghazâlî distinguishes God's knowledge and judgement of how the optimum order of things must be explicitly from His willing that it be so ordered, when he says that as in the case of a human builder the perfection of the construction occurs «not by coïncidence but through wisdom and intent because of the will to execute it perfectly» (*lâ bil-ittifâqi bal bil-ḥikmati wal-qaṣdi li-irâdati l-iḥkâm*: p. 81, ult.). According to al-Ghazâlî it is impossible that God act simply by His nature (*li-dhâtihî*), for if He did the world would have to have existed from eternity, which is impossible. God acts, therefore, by a distinct attribute, viz., a power to act (*al-qudrah*).[87]

His power, however, requires something to direct it to its object (*taṣrîfuhâ ilâ l-maqdûr: Iqtiṣâd*, p. 107, 12 ff. and *Qudsiyya*, p. 85, 9 = *Iḥyâ'* 1, p. 108, 9). Thus it is that he says in one place that «the world comes to be through [God's] will» (*ḥâdithun bil-irâdah: Tahâfut*, p. 217, 5) and in another that it comes to be through His power (*'anhâ yaṣdiru l-khalqu wal-ikhtirâ'*). The expression 'will' or 'volition' (*al-irâdah, al-mashî-'ah*), he notes, is employed of God metaphorically, following the usage of revelation. In its ordinary lexical usage (*al-lughah*), that is, when used of a human agent, 'will' names the faculty (or the act of the faculty) that determines the agent's action with respect to a particular purpose or end (*gharaḍ*) that he judges to be beneficial or advantageous to himself (cf., e. g., *Tahâfut*, p. 40 and *Iḥyâ'* 4, p. 93, 21 ff.). Will, thus, is often identified with appetite (*shahwah*) and, as we saw above, its act is determined by antecedent motivation given in sensation or imagination, or in an intellectual judgement (see generally *Iḥyâ'* 3, pp. 7 f., 4, pp. 108 f. and 248 f., and *Mîzân*, p. 15). When will and choice (*al-ikhtiyâr*) are formally distinguished the latter is taken to be a subclass of volitions, viz., those that occur as the result of an intellectual judgement of what is best (*Iḥyâ'* 4, pp. 248 f.).[88] Actions that occur simply through nature, such as that of fire, occur in a

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[85] Al-Ghazâlî, like Avicenna, uses '*al-ḥukm*' (judgement) for apperception in general (of the senses, of the *vis æstimativa*, and of the intellect). For the background of these identifications, cf. the statement of al-Bayhaqî discussing the divine name "*al-Ḥakam*", that «His judgement is His statement (*khabaruhû*) and His statement is His saying (*qawluhû*) and thus the intention of the term refers to His Speaking (*kalâmuhû*)» (*al-I'tiqâd*, p. 34; the same formulation is found in *Taḥbîr*, fol. 73r°). Al-Ghazâlî exegetically identifies all three terms (*khalq, taqdîr*, and *amr*) in Q 54.49 f. to which he alludes in *Maqṣad*, pp. 98, 16 f. and 102,6 (cited above) and in *Iḥyâ'* 4, p. 94,7 (cited below).

[86] *Iljâm*, p. 20 (on which see below) and *Maqṣad*, p. 129, 18 f. Concerning this identification and al-Ghazâlî's identification, thus, of God's speaking with «the first, universal ordering», it should be noted that abû Isḥâq al-Isfarâ'înî is reported (Fr. 49 and 52) to have held that "internal speaking" (*al-kalâmu l-qâ'imu bil-nafs*) is what is termed '*tadbîr*'.

[87] Cf., e. g., *Iqtiṣâd*, pp. 80 ff. The argument here follows that of al-Juwaynî's in *R. al-Niẓâmiyya*, p. 20.

[88] Elsewhere (*Mi'yâr*, p. 73, 1 f.) he says that 'chooses' (*mukhtâr*) is used equivocally in two senses, viz., to mean (1) «who has the power to omit [the action]» (*al-qâdiru 'alâ l-tark*) and (2) «who proceeds to do something because of his appetite and because of the arousal of a motivation within himself» (*al-ladhî yaqdumu 'alâ l-shay'i li-shahwatihî wa-nbi'âthi dâ'iyatin min dhâtihî*).

purely deterministic manner (*jabran maḥḍan*) without purpose or foresight. The inten-
tional actions of human agents occur through choice, but their choices are the deter-
mined outcome of antecedent events (sensations and cognitions) that are not chosen, so
that in human actions there is both choice (*ikhtiyâr*) and deterministic constraint (*jabr*).
God's actions, by contrast, are «pure choice» (*ikhtiyârun maḥḍ*) and His choice is not
preceded by uncertainty and deliberation (*Iḥyâ'* 4, p. 249, 14 ff.). Characteristically, al-
Ghazâlî does not clarify what he means by 'pure choice' here. He may mean (1) that the
act of God's will is not determinately caused by His knowledge and so, by implication,
(a) that He could in fact have created other than whan He has created and/or (b) that He
need not have created anything at all.[89] He may, on the other hand, mean (2) that since
God is not subject to being moved by appetite and cannot act for any self interest (it is
impossible that He derive any advantage or benefit from any creature), the act of His
will does not follow a motivation (*dâ'iyah, bâ'ithah*) of the kind that determines human
choices.[90] Our problem, then is to discover exactly how, according to al-Ghazâlî, God's
will is related to His knowledge and, more specifically, to see how he conceives the
ontological origin and nature of the possibles and how God's knowledge of them and
His power are related to His will to create this world as it actually exists. Unfortunately
he nowhere sets out his understanding of either the whole issue or of all the separate
questions formally and adequately. We shall have, therefore, to examine several pas-
sages in which the elements of the problem are directly raised in the hope of gaining
some clearer grasp of what he has to say.

God's knowledge and His will together form the original Determination (*taqdîr*) and
Ordering (*tadbîr*) that al-Ghazâlî considers the primeval act of creation (*al-khalq*).
Thus he says,

> '*Al-qudrah*' is an expression for the attribute through which a thing is made to
> exist in a particular way through the determination of will and knowledge and
> to occur in conformity with them.[91]

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[89] It is clear, there is no question of God's action being the function of some purely intrinsic,
natural determinism like the action of fire, in the example. Such purely natural events are
sometimes described as taking place "by coïncidence" (*bil-ittifâq*); see, e.g., *Maqṣad*, p. 81,
ult., translated above and n. 92 below.

[90] For the background, cp. the statement of al-Bâqillânî (*Hidâya*, fol. 19r°), «His acts have to take
place through volition (*bil-irâdah*); He has no need of any motivation that would move Him to
the act of willing (*lam yaḥtaj ilâ dâ'in yad'ûhu ilâ fa'li l-irâdah*), whence it is necessarily the case
that He acts or does not act because of His will». See also *Miy'âr*, p. 73, 1, cited below.

[91] *Al-qudratu 'ibâratun 'ani l-ma'nâ l-ladhî bihî yûjadu l-shay'u mutaqaddiratan bi-taqdîri l-irâdati
wal-'ilmi wâqi'an 'alâ waqfihimâ*: *Maqṣad*, p. 145, 1 ff. (cp. *'Arshiyya*, p. 10). (The translation
here is rather unsatisfactory, since the Arabic sentence is difficult to render without distortion,
as both '*mutaqaddiratan*' and '*wâqi'an*' are circumstantial to '*yûjadu*'). With this, cp. *Iḥyâ'* 1,
p. 90, 9-12, where he expresses himself in very traditional terms and later on the same page
(11.28 f.): «*aḥdatha l-khalqa iẓhâran li-qudratihî li-mâ sabaqa min irâdatihî wa-li-mâ ḥaqqa fî l-
azali min kalimatihî*».

In this act of creation, God's knowledge and will may be considered a single actuality. Creation, he says,

> does not happen through coïncidence (*bil-ittifâq*) and luck, but through a volition, a wisdom, a right judgement and a decisive command which is metaphorically referred to by the expression 'the Decree' (*al-qaḍâ'*) and of which it is said that it is "like a glance of the eye" (Q 54.50).[92]

On the basis of purely grammatical considerations one can read the singulars of the descriptive phrases 'which is metaphorically ... Decree' and 'of which it is said ...' as qualifying only the last term, viz., 'a decisive command' (*amrin jazm*), rather than the entire series of terms together. In support of this reading he might point to the fact that, in the Koran verse alluded to, 'like a glance of the eye' describes 'Our command' (*amrunâ*). Such a reading would tend to suggest, if not clearly to imply, that one is to take 'volition', 'wisdom', 'judgement', and 'command' here as naming, if not somehow distinct attributes of God, at least distinguishable aspects or moments of God's creating. In the traditional Ash'arite doctrine, God's will, knowledge, and speaking (here, command) are understood as somehow distinct attributes and one can take the 'a wisdom and a right judgement' of the present text as a merely rhetorical redundancy. On the other hand, as we have noted, al-Ghazâlî identifies God's wisdom and also His speaking (*kalâmuhû*) with His knowledge as one and the same. We have seen also that in *Maqṣad* he employs 'judgement', 'wisdom', and 'command' to refer to the originating determination (*taqdîr*) that is God's "creating" (*al-khalq*). Thus he uses 'like a glance of the eye' to describe 'the primal command' (*al-amru l-awwalî*) in *Maqṣad*, p. 98, 14f., but there states that the command is identical with 'the original ordering' (*al-tadbîru l-awwal*) and several pages later (*ibid.*, p. 102, 6f. = *Arba'în*, p. 17, 10) employs the same Koranic phrase to describe the Ordering, which he goes on to say is identical with the Judgement.[93] From this it would seem clear that in *Iḥyâ'* 4, p. 94 'a

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[92] *Iḥyâ'* 4, p. 94, 5ff., reading *bakht* (luck) for *baḥth* in line 6; cp. *Maqṣad*, p. 81, *ult.*, translated above. With this cp. *Ilâhiyyât*, p. 415, 2f. (= *Najâh*, p. 284, 12f.): «There is no way you can deny the marvelous evidences (*al-âthâru l-'ajîbah*) of the world's becomings and of the parts of the heavens and the parts of animals and plants, none of which are produced by coïncidence but on the contrary require that there be a given ordering» (*lâ taṣduru ttifâqan bal yaqtaḍî tadbîran-mâ*), an ordering which he identifies with God's providence (*'inâyah*). Note that Avicenna's '*tadbîrun-mâ*' corresponds to the Judgement or Ordainment that al-Ghazâlî also refers to as a *tadbîr*. By 'coïncidence' (*ittifâq*) here Avicenna does not mean chance or a fortuitous occurrence but whatever takes place simply by nature and without an end or purpose that is known and in some way intended or chosen (cf. *Burhân*, p. 298, 11-15 and *Ilâhiyyât*, pp. 172f. and cp. *'Arshiyya*, p. 10, 2ff, which is discussed below). It is in this sense that we should understand al-Ghazâlî's use of the word here. '*Al-qaḍâ'*' here does not name the Accomplishment, which is the concrete system or mechanism of the universe, but rather the Eternal Decree (*Maqṣad*, p. 103, 5), on which see below.

[93] In both of these places in *Maqṣad* the editor has failed to note the Koranic allusion and reads *ka-lamḥi l-baṣar* rather than *ka-lamḥin bil-baṣar* with Q 54.50 and as in *Iḥyâ'*, *loc. cit;* cf., however, *Aqsâm*, pp. 113f. One might suggest that there is a background for these identifications in

wisdom', 'a right judgement', and 'a decisive command' all refer to and describe one and the same attribute, viz., God's knowledge; and in view of this it might be suggested that the two phrases, 'which is ... Decree' and 'a decisive command' are to be taken as referring to and describing the entire set of terms, which are accordingly viewed as together describing one thing, viz., the original determination and ordering, the Eternal Decree (al-qaḍâ'u l-azalî). But what exactly does 'the original ordering' name and in what sense is it one thing?

Al-Ghazâlî distinguishes God's will from His knowledge and power, as he does earlier in Iḥyâ' (1, p. 90, translated below). This distinction is unequivocally made in Tahâfut (p. 163) and is plainly implied where he insists on the necessary role of God's will in the creation of the universe (ibid., pp. 41 and 203 ff.) against the thesis of Avicenna and the falâsifa (set forth, e. g., ibid., pp. 156 f.) that God's knowledge and will are identical with His essence. So too in discussing the necessity of the order of the universe in Iljâm (pp. 20 f., translated below) knowledge and will are twice explicitly mentioned.[94] Two things, at least, are clear: (1) since the world cannot have existed from eternity the attributes by virtue of which God acts in creation must be somehow distinct from His essence as such and (2) because of the difference between the possibility of there being a world and the actual existence of this contingent world His will must be distinguishable from His knowledge. In this al-Ghazâlî follows basically the teaching of traditional kalâm. Because of their radically voluntaristic conception of God's action and His relationship to His creatures, the Ash'arite masters of the earlier period, had no problem in grounding the distinction between His power, His knowledge, and His will. Even though not driven by any Neoplatonic commitments, they were well aware, moreover, of the ontological problems involved in distinguishing God's essential attributes from His essence and the several essential attributes one from another. In dealing with these matters, they characteristically concentrated their attention on the logic of the predication of power, knowledge, and will as these are said of God and as He is said to act and to be related to creatures through them. Al-Ghazâlî, however,

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the Ash'arite tradition, e. g., in Laṭâ'if 6, p. 162 (ad 64, 11) where he glosses "bi-kulli shay'in 'alîm" saying, «i. e., every single thing that happens is from God as an act of creation and through His knowledge and will as a judgement» (min qibalihî khalqan wa-bi-'ilmihî wa-irâdatihî ḥukman). Al-Qushayrî, however, is a quite conventional and orthodox Ash'arite and will not, as al-Ghazâlî does, blurr the distinctions between God's will and His speaking and His knowledge. Avicenna cites Q 54.50 in describing the "amr" ("thing" or "command") on which depends the universal whole (irtabaṭa l-kull) in Aqsâm al-'ulûm, p. 114,3. (For the same use of 'irtabaṭa' with regard to the relationship of sublunary entities to the last separated intelligence and the ambivalence of Avicenna's use of 'al-amr' here, cp. Ilâhiyyât, p. 410, 13 f.).

[94] In the first of these God's knowledge is referred to by the expression 'His word', but the identitiy of God's speaking and His knowledge is stated in the immediate context. In arguing implicitly for the thesis that God does not create simply "by His essence" in Iqtiṣâd, al-Ghazâlî focuses on His power (qudrah) rather than His will (e. g., pp. 81 f.), but in this he follows the traditional conception of action in which choice and volition are elements (cp., e. g., Tahâfut, pp. 96 f. and 102). The distance between the traditional Ash'arite conception of the nature of God's action and that of Avicenna is presented paradigmatically where the latter identifies tarjîḥ and takhṣîṣ (Ishârât, p. 153, 12).

chose to elaborate his theology in terms of a theoretical framework which is different
from those of classical *kalâm* in a number of significant respects, including certain Neo-
platonising tendencies. Within this framework the roles of God's knowledge and of His
will are not in every respect so easily separable one from another as they are in the
traditional theology. Moreover, because of the need to counter the analysis and the
conclusions of Avicenna and the *falâsifa*, al-Ghazâlî had to deal in greater detail than
had his predecessors with the problem of these attributes and their relation to one
another as they are eternally in God. He tends, as we have seen, sometimes to lump
God's will and His knowledge together insofar as they are convergent in the act of
creation in what he terms the original determination and ordering of the universe. As is
true of a number of passages, the rhetorical eloquence of *Ihyâ'* 4, 94 is notably greater
than is the clarity of its intention. In order to achieve a better view of al-Ghazâlî's
position here we shall have to follow a more circuitous path.

4.2. Possible Beings and the Possible World

The question of the ontological origin of the possibility of the possibles and of whether
or not God's power extends to an infinite number of classes of beings, albeit discussed
and disputed, were not topics of heated controversy among the Ash'arites and were
not, therefore, regularly given systematic treatment in the shorter manuals. Al-Ash'arî
and some of his followers state that it is God who determines the classes of things that
exist, «Who makes the different classes of things to be different»[95] and, consistently
with this, many of the Ash'arites, among them al-Bâqillânî, held that God's power
extends to an infinity of classes of things and that he could have created an altogether
different world.[96] A number of Ash'arite masters, however, held that, although God's
power extends to an infinite number of possible individuals, the classes of the things He
has the power to create (*ajnâsu l-maqdûrât*) are finite in number and, in effect, appear
to have held that there are no possible classes of which individual instances are not
known to exist.[97] Al-Ghazâlî, characteristically, does not take these questions up for-
mally so as to inform us of his own position with regard to them. We shall have, there-

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[95] Cf. *Thaghr*, p. 93, 11 f. and *Ta'wîl*, fol. 108v°, 7 f. «. . . *fa-khâlafa bayna ajnâsi l-barriyyati bi-lutfi
l-tadbîri wa-bayna anwâ'i l-khalîqati bi-husni l-taqdîr*». (For this lexical usage of *'khâlafa,
yukhâlifu',* see also Ibn Qutayba, *Ikhtilâf*, p. 14, 7 f. and *Latâ'if* 5, p. 287, 1 f. and cp. the use of
'mâthala, yumâthilu' in the opposite sense in *Mushkil*, p. 16, 8.) Cf. also, e. g., *Mujarrad*, p. 37,
16 f.

[96] Cf., e. g., *Mujarrad*, pp. 125, 3 f. and 246, 12 ff., *Latâ'if* 2, p. 165 (*ad* 6.38), *Tahbîr*, fol. 79r°,
6 ff., and particularly *Sharh al-Irshâd* foll. 159r° f. It is clear that the *mutakallimîn* were aware
that this is an important question, but because it was not a focus of major controversy (e. g.,
between the Ash'arites and the Mu'tazila) it did not receive much attention, at least in the
available manuals. The *falâsifa* don't raise the issue, because it was not raised in their sources.

[97] Cf., e. g., *Ikhtisâr*, fol. 205v°; *Sharh al-Irshâd*, loc. cit. and *Ghunya*, fol. 106r°. Al-Juwaynî takes
the position that there is no way to know whether the classes of possible beings are infinite or not
(*Ikhtisâr*, foll. 205v°, 19 f. and 129r° f.).

fore, in order to discover what his thought on the topic may have been, to examine several passages that raise the question of the possibles and of God's power and will obliquely and try to determine what is implied or required for consistency.

In a number of places al-Ghazâlî speaks of God's will in traditional Ash'arite terms as that attribute whereby God determines the occurrence of particular events to particular times and places.[98] Thus, for example, he says in *Ihyâ'* 1, p. 90, 9-12,

> His will subsists (*qâ'imah*)[99] in His essence as one of His attributes. By virtue of it He is eternally described as willing in His eternity the existence of entities in their own times which He has determined. They exist in their times as in His eternity He has willed without either priority or posteriority. Rather, they occur in accord with His knowledge and His will without substitution or altera-tion; He has ordered things (*dabbara l-umûr*) without either setting out a se-quence of thoughts or awaiting a particular time, wherefore one thing does not distract Him from another.

Action does not ensue directly from an agent's knowledge as such[100] but requires, rather, something to distinguish (*mayyaza*) and to make a determinant selection (*raj-jaha*) between contrary possibles in order to direct the power to act. The function of God's will, accordingly, «is to distinguish one thing from its equivalent» (*sha'nuhâ tamyîzu shay'in min mithlihî: Tahâfut*, p. 40, 1 = *Iqtiṣâd*, p. 106, ult.). In the section on God's knowledge in *Qudsiyya* (p. 84, 24 f. = *Ihyâ'* 1, pp. 89 f.) al-Ghazâlî speaks only of His knowledge of what actually exists (or shall exist). In *Iqtiṣâd* (p. 100), however, he says that God knows everything that is knowable (*jamî'u l-ma'lûmât*)[101] i. e., besides Himself, an infinity of possibles, both those that He will cause to exist and those that He will not cause to exist. The latter are not discussed in this passage, but are illustrated elsewhere where al-Ghazâlî states, for example, that there is more than one sun «in possibility» (*Maqṣad*, p. 77, 17 f.) albeit only one now exists or ever will. So too, it lies within God's power to bring this phase of creation to its end with the resurrection and judgement now, if He wished (*ibid.*, p. 145, 4). Where he dwells on God's knowledge of an infinity of possibles and His power to create them (e. g., *Iqtiṣâd*, pp. 81 f. and 100), he speaks only of an infinitely extended temporal sequence of further instances of the kinds of things that already exist in the world. God's knowledge of contingent possibles, as presented here, is the knowledge of an infinite number of possible individuals of a

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[98] Cf., e. g., *Tahâfut*, pp. 39 ff., *Iqtiṣâd*, pp. 101 ff., and *Qudsiyya*, p. 85 (= *Ihyâ'* 1,p. 108, 16 ff.).

[99] In this dogmatic introduction that precedes *al-Qudsiyya* in *Ihyâ'* al-Ghazâlî adheres formally to the tradition of the manuals in both topics and language. '*Qâ'imah*' occurs thus as a part of a traditional doctrinal formula and accordingly need not be understood literally or as it would if found in the earlier Ash'arite manuals.

[100] *Iqtiṣâd*, p. 102, 1 ff. and *Qudsiyya*, p. 85, 6 f.; cp. *de Anima*, p. 194, 9, where Avicenna says that the perceptive faculties (viz. sense, imagination, æstimatio, and intellect), having only apper-ception and judgement, are not motive.

[101] By itself this expression might also be rendered "all the intelligibles", but such would not be correct in the immediate context since the discussion here is not restricted to the possibles (*al-mumkinât*) as such, sc., as universals.

finite number of classes of beings, not of an infinite number of possible individuals belonging to each of an infinite number of possible kinds. It is clear, thus that God could, in principle, have chosen that there exist in particular places and at particular times greater or lesser numbers of individuals of the various possible kinds or that, within the limiting constraints of the universal system, individuals circumstantially receive one or another series of perfections and imperfections. This is implicit in what al-Ghazâlî says about choosing between contraries and the possibility of there being two suns. In demonstrating that God wills (*Iqtiṣâd*, p. 101, 5f.), he says that what God has created is characterised by «various sorts of possibilities» (*ḍurûbun mina l-jawâz*) which are indistinguishable one from another save by something that determinately selects some among them (*murajjiḥ*) and not others. Of themselves, the individual essences do not present a basis for selection, «since the relation of the essence (*al-dhât*) to the two contraries is one and the same». What he has in mind is made plain enough when he cites «motion instead of rest» as an example of the contraries God chooses (*ibid*, p. 103, 1f.).[102] What al-Ghazâlî apparently asserts, thus, is that God can choose to create or not to create some of the possible accidents and relations that can occur in and among those instances of the possible essences that He has chosen to create. Nowhere, however – nowhere, at least, that I have noted – does he suggest that there is "in possibility" or that there may be among the things subject to God's power classes of beings essentially different in kind from those that occur in the present universe. Al-Ghazâlî, as we have noted, says that there is more than one sun "in possibility". Would

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[102] This clearly envisions but a finite number of essences, instantiations of which are possible. In the immediate context, it might be objected, that he appeals to creation as given in order to prove that God wills and that it would be therefore inappropriate for him to raise the question of the possibility of other essential kinds. Theologically, however, the issue is of such importance that he should certainly have brought it up if he did not hold that the classes of the possibles are restricted. The question was disputed (see n. 96 above) and al-Ghazâlî cannot have been unaware of the problem; and he was certainly not shy about introducing issues into contexts where their presence is not strictly required, but on the contrary, as we shall see, occasionally does so apparently to signal his revision of traditional teaching. It might be suggested that since the matter was commonly presented in the Ashʿarite texts as a question of whether or not the classes of possible "accidents" are infinite, al-Ghazâlî felt that it was not really pertinent to the Aristotelian conceptual framework of his own doctrine. That is, in the traditional *kalâm* of al-Ghazâlî's predecessors, accidents (*al-aʿrâḍ*) are conceived as entities (*dhawât*) properly speaking and their classes are classes of essences, while bodies (corporeal beings) are merely conglomerates or composites of atoms and accidents, atoms (*al-jawâhir*) being identical members of a single class of entities; any diversity of essences and of the beings of the world of our experience will, within this context, necessarily have its reality as a diversity of "accidents". Since the *falâsifa* did not raise the question, but took for granted that the possibles are simply possible instantiations of the kinds of things that already exist and since, in the Aristotelian framework al-Ghazâlî had adopted, accidents (e. g., colors) are not properly speaking, entities or essences (forms, species, etc.) anyway (are not possibles in the most primary and significant sense) he may have felt free to ignore the matter. If this is the case, however, either he did not grasp the significance of the issue or he willfully dodged it on the basis of an equivocation of 'accident'. There are a number of questions involved here, however, and the matter is too complex for us to pursue in the present context.

he, however, say that God could create a ninth heaven (cp. *Sharḥ al-Irshâd*, fol. 159v°, 2ff.)? If he follows Avicenna and the *falâsifa*, a ninth heaven (with its angel, etc.) would not be of the same species as the others in the way that another sun would, by definition, be of the same kind as the one that we know. In *Iljâm* (pp. 20f., translated below) he says that it is counterfactually possible that God have created men in such a way that the mind could govern the body without the mediating instrumentality of the brain. The matter is not elaborated there, but it would seem most likely that what is envisioned is simply an alteration of the physiological organisation of the body of the mortal rational animal, so that no essentially different kind of being is posited. We shall have shortly to return to the question of whether or not, according to al-Ghazâlî, there are possibles that have not actually been instantiated. [103]

The possibles as such and in themselves (and their possible realisations under various possible conditions) as what could be but need not be, may be distinguished from the possibles that God wills to cause to exist and which must, therefore, necessarily come to be when and as He wills. Accordingly «every thing that enters into existence does so by necessity (*bil-wujûb*) and so exists necessarily even if it is not necessary in itself (*li-dhâtihî*) but is necessary by the Eternal Decree» (*Maqṣad*, p. 102, 4f.; see also *ibid.*, p. 137, translated below). «What occurs of good and evil is decreed and what is decreed must necessarily occur given the prior act of [God's] will (*ba'da sabqi l-mashî'ah*), for there is none to amend His judgement and none to put off His decree» (*Iḥyâ'* 4, p. 253, 9ff.). The existence of what God does not will to create – of what He knows will not come to exist – though possible in itself, is in fact impossible. [104] It is in this context that one may most readily understand the statement (*Iqtiṣâd*, p. 107, *ult.*) that everything which falls under God's power, sc., what is in fact possible, is willed by God (*kullu maqdûrin murâd*) and so also the assertion that the possible – the contingent whose existence is not impossible – actually comes to be (*al-maqdûru kâ'in: Maqṣad*, p. 103, 6).

In *Iḥyâ'* 4 (pp. 249f.) he says,

> He (the Exalted) says, "We did not create the heavens and the earth and what is between them frivolously; We created them only with rightness (*bil-ḥaqq*)"

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[103] In *Tahâfut* he twice states (pp. 173 and 176) that Avicenna held that the species and genera of universals (and by implication, therefore, of possibles) that God knows are infinite. I know of no place where Avicenna says this nor, moreover, can I think of how such a thesis would be integrated into his metaphysics. Al-Ghazâlî, in any case, says nothing to suggest that he holds such a position himself.

[104] Cf. *Iqtiṣâd*, pp. 83ff. and below. For the earlier discussion of this question, cf., e.g., *Tamhîd* §565f., *Shâmil* (69), p. 375 and *Laṭâ'if* 5, p. 141 translated below. Al-Ghazâlî's argument here (p. 85, 4ff. and cp. pp. 181f.), sc., that its existence is impossible (*muḥâl*) because if it were to come to be then God's eternal knowledge would become error (*jahl*) is common with the Ash'arites (cf., e.g., al-Harâsî, fol. 192v°f.) and was elaborated already by the Mu'tazilite, abû 'Alî al-Jubbâ'î (*Maqâlât*, pp. 204f. = 560f., which is translated and discussed in our "Can God do Evil" (in *Divine Omniscience and Omnipotence in Medieval Philosophy*, ed. T. Rudavsky, Utrecht, 1985), pp. 77f.

(Q 44.38 f.). Thus, every thing that is between the heaven and the earth comes to be according to a necessary order and a consequent rightness and is such that it is not conceivable (*lâ yutaṣawwar*) that it be save as it in fact does come to be and is according to this order which actually exists.[105] Accordingly, whatever is later occurs later simply because it must await its condition. That what is conditioned be prior to its condition is [logically] impossible (*muḥâl*) and the [logically] impossible cannot be described as lying within [God's] power (*al-muḥâlu lâ yûṣafu bi-kawnihî maqdûran*).

The passage is characteristic of al-Ghazâlî's writing, both in its rhetorical eloquence and in its ambiguity. His general intention in the context is primarily to assert that it is impossible that there have occurred, or that there ever occur, in this world anything other than what has occurred and what shall occur. The formulation, however, seems somewhat more elaborate than need be if this is all that he means to say, and so deserves closer analysis, particularly since there is, in several parallel contexts, a similar overload of potentially serious implications.[106]

Several of the terms require examination. The word '*ḥaqq*' is extraordinarily rich in meanings and connotations and the sense of the Koranic "We created only *bil-ḥaqq*" was much discussed. The Ashʿarites generally understand '*al-ḥaqq*' here as designating the "Truth" which is God's creative "Be". For al-Ghazâlî, as we have seen, this is the Decisive Command, which he identifies with God's knowledge and will.[107] Al-Ghazâlî explains what it means for the universe to be created *bil-ḥaqq* in two phrases that descirbe how the totality of events of the sublunary world are systematically ordered. The first says that they take place in (or according to) a necessary order ('*alâ tartîbin wâjib*), i.e., in a necessary sequence of priority and posteriority or in a necessary hierarchy of higher and lower. It is not immediately clear, however, in what sense he may mean that the given order is necessary. The meaning of the second, viz., that they take place «['*alâ*] *ḥaqqin lâzim*», is more problematic yet because of the ambivalence both of '*ḥaqq*' and of '*lâzim*.' One might hear '*ḥaqq*' here in the sense (1) of 'right', that is to say, of what belongs to God by right, i.e., by His very being. This may be taken in a way

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[105] The sentence is architecturally quite complex. The primary subject, "everything that is between the heaven and the earth" has syntactically two predicates, (1) "*ḥâdithun*" (comes to be) with its pair of modifiers and (2) "*lâ yutaṣawwaru an yakûna...*" (is such that it is not conceivable that it be ...), which itself is followed by two predicates, 'as ... come to be' and '[as it] is according ... exists'. From a purely grammatical standpoint, the compound clause "*lâ yutaṣawwar*" could be read as a qualifier of "a consequent rightness" (or of "a necessary order and a consequent rightness", if the two terms are taken together as representing but one thing) rather than as a second predicate to "everything ... earth", but such a reading would seem unlikely on stylistic as well as on intentional grounds.

[106] With the use of the Koranic verse here, cp. Avicenna's statement (*Ilâhiyyât*, p. 415, cited above) that the order of the universe did not happen "by coïncidence" but rather is the result of providence ('*inâyah*).

[107] For the background, cf., e.g., *Lumaʿ* (A), § 115, *Tamhîd*, pp. 312 f., and *Laṭâʾif* 5, p. 98. Thus the '*bil-ḥaqq*' of Q 44,39 is glossed in *Laṭâʾif* 5, p. 385 «*bil-ḥukmi l-ḥaqqi wa-bil-amri l-ḥaqq*».

that conforms to a use of the word which is common enough in the theological litera-ture,[108] but seems quite unlikely here in view of the immediate context, since the phrase '*haqqin lâzim*' follows and so is, by implication, coupled with '*tartîbin wâjib*'. One can, on the other hand, plausibly hear '*haqq*' in this passage as meaning (2) what is right, i. e., what is as it really ought to be (*'alâ mâ yanbaghî*) or as it must be (*wajaba*) if it is to be right.[109] It will be right, then, as what is done is done as it should be done, either as such because it is what it is or with respect to some end. If we take the word in this sense then, the expression 'a consequent rightness' will mean something like a rightness whose rightness is that it follows as it should, and so a rightness which is right and as it should be and that also follows either as consequent of something or as what ought to be or has to be in view of something. We have, therefore, to ask what it is for creation to be right (in what consists its *ihkâm*: its being done right) and of what this rightness may be a consequence and how.

Certain basic implications of the passage are clear. Following the formulation of the Koranic verse, al-Ghazâlî distinguishes two basic terms, (a) the heavens and the earth and (b) the things that are between them. The former, as we have seen, are to be identified as the universal, permanent causes that constitute the higher, celestial world with its angelic spirits and its changeless spheres and heavenly bodies and the latter the lower, corporeal world with the transient entities and momentary events that come to be and pass away in the sublunary world. We can, then, understand 'necessary' and 'consequent' with reference to the givenness of the system (*nizâm*) of the universe. That is to say, what al-Ghazâlî means is that sublunary beings come to exist and pass away in orders and in sequences that are necessary given the existence of the universal order and that they take place according to a rightness that follows (*lâzim*) as the inevit-able consequence of the systematic operation of the universal causes. Whatever occurs occurs only at the place and at the moment in which the conditions of its existence converge and are fulfilled and it is inconceivable that it occur otherwise, and it is right and proper that things should be so.[110] As we have seen, al-Ghazâlî includes the opera-

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[108] For the traditional use, cf., e. g., *Luma'* (Q), p. 61, 19 and see *ibid.*, p. 73, n. 16 to the transla-tion. That this traditional sense of 'right' is apparently alien to al-Ghazâlî, *v. infra*.

[109] Ibn Fâris (2, p. 15) says that in its basic meaning the root «signifies *ihkâmu l-shay'i wa-sih-hatihî*», i. e., is to do or make something with skill and perfection (the way it ought to be done if it is to be done right) and the things's being good (correct, valid). The verb, '*haqqa, yahiqqu*' is defined as an equivalent of '*wajaba, yajibu*' in *Maqâyîs*, *Dîwân al-adab*, and *Tâj al-lugha*, s. v. In the present context 'necessary' or 'obligatory' in the traditional, juridical sense is excluded, since God is not subject to the command of another. Although '*al-haqq*' in the separate lexical sense of what truly is (what exists and is a fact) or of what is true (the verbal presentation and assertion of what is in fact the case) is not revelant to the present passage, it may be noted that al-Zajjâjî (p. 307) defines '*haqqa, yahuqqu*' by '*wajaba, yajibu*'. For al-Ghazâlî's use of '*yan-baghî*' in contexts such as this, see below.

[110] The terms will thus be in basic conformity with al-Ghazâlî's usage on the preceding page (p. 249, 32 ff.), where he says, «Nothing comes before and nothing after save *bil-haqqi wal-luzûm* and thus are all the actions of God (the exalted); were this not the case, to make things occur before and after would be pointless (*'abath*) and analogous to the deeds of the insane». Though perhaps rhetorically effective, the statement is somewhat vague. "*Bil-haqqi wal-*

tion of proximate efficient causes amongst the conditions that must be fulfilled in order for any event to take place. In view of this and of the way in which he here links the occurrence of all terrestrial events to the «necessary order» and the «consequent rightness» of the universal causes, he would seem unambiguously to imply not merely that God only creates through the panoply of secondary causes that make up the universal system, but that, given the system, His creative activity takes place only within and through the system; He cannot intervene directly or indirectly to alter what is originally preordained by the universal system. What, in effect, is not programmed into the system from the beginning cannot occur within the system as the result of its operation and therefore does not actually lie within the power of God (is not really *maqdûr ʿalayhî*). This is the true, the right and proper order of things. It may, in some way, be counterfactually possible that God have created another universe than the one He did create, but given the existence of the one that exists, it is inconceivable (i.e., impossible: *muḥâl*) that anything take place but what has inevitably to take place. Al-Ghazâlî's statements to the effect that God creates terrestrial events «either through an intermediary or without an intermediary» are thus deceptive, in that the second alternative is true only of the creation of the heavens and the earth, «the permanent and enduring causes». That God can only work through the system would seem fully confirmed by al-Ghazâlî's assertions that were the system not ordered exactly as it is there would occur more evil in the world than that which results from the present order. If this be true, then clearly it is not possible that God act immediately in order to cause or to prevent the occurrence of any sublunary event, so that a particular evil should not take place; it is impossible that He bypass the predetermined operation of any of the universal causes or of any of the lower, transitory causes as determined by the functioning of whole. There remain, however, a number of unanswered questions. Although he is strongly opposed to the emanationism of al-Fârâbî and Avicenna (*Tahâfut*, pp. 110ff.), al-Ghazâlî does not inform us of his own views concerning the initial creation of the universal causes (the celestial intellects, the heavenly spheres and bodies, the earth, etc.). That God cannot presently intervene in particular events in the universe so as to change what was determined in the original creation of the system, does not necessarily imply

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luzûm" can be analysed in several ways (here including 'Truth' as referring to God's eternal speaking), all of them more or less consistent and plausible with the general thesis. '*Al-ʿabath*', however, is a bit problematic, at least if we will not take it, together with the following phrase, as simply a kind of rhetorical arabesque. Its usual, formal meaning (what is pointless, i.e., that in doing which or omitting which the agent has no rational purpose: e.g., *Iqtiṣâd*, p. 163), makes scant sense in the context, for as we have seen, God cannot be said, properly speaking, to have a goal in his action (here, cf. *ibid*, pp. 180f.). The end or goal, then, will have to be something intrinsic to the rightness of the system and its operational consequences that is intended by God, even if not as a goal for Himself. So also if we take it that al-Ghazâlî is using the word in an extended sense as an equivalent of '*safîh*' (foolish, irrational), as would seem likely in view of the ensuing descriptive clause, the foolishness will be realised and measured as such by something intrinsic to the world, sc., that God should (counterfactually) have made a world in which the laws and conditions that govern the sequences of events were not systematically ordered as they are. That the *ʿabath* is *safîh*, see *ibid*, p. 163. For the traditional Ashʿarite analysis, cf. *Ikhtiṣâr*, foll. 97rºf. and 99rº.

that at the time of the Judgement He cannot again act directly to alter the universal system or to do away with it.

It is to be noted that, given the established nature of the possible kinds of things and the way in which the realised instances of these kinds causally interact with one another according to the fixed ordering of the higher and universal causes, an essential component of the original sense of 'al-'âdah' (God's customary ordering of events) as employed in traditional Ash'arite theology is effectively done away with. In classical Ash'arite doctrine, that is, the apparently lawful consistency in which certain actions and events are regularly observed to follow the one upon the other is neither determined by nor essentially related to anything in the nature of the events themselves or to any property as such of the subject or locus in which they take place. No contingent being or event effects or causes the coming to be of any other.[111] Albeit occurring in a regular, and in some cases invariant, order, their relationship is strictly occasionalistic, extrinsic and essentially arbitrary: God's habitual ordering of the occurrences of His own acts. The usual order is altered or interrupted only rarely, in the occurrence of miracles, which are associated with prophets, and of wonders, which are associated with saints. Save for such "breaking of the habitual order" (kharqu l-'âdah), God creates always in consistent patterns of association between particular kinds of bodies and events and in consistent sequences of antecedence and consequence within these associations. Thus, to speak of a miracle as a break in the normal course of events has totally different connotations for al-Ghazâlî than for his Ash'arite predecessors. Given the existence of the system of universal and permanent causes and the natures of the kinds of creatures that do and can exist, there is really nothing at all conventional about the sequences of events; they are lawful in the strict sense of the term. For al-Ghazâlî as for Avicenna, miracles and wonders are merely extraordinary occurrences that take place within and as the result of the lawful operation of the universal system. They take place, that is, as the result of unusual concurrences of celestial causes, concurrences that are, so to speak, programmed into the system from the beginning, not by the Creator's direct intervention into the operation of the system or suspension of its laws. In short, the habitual course of events (jarayânu l-'âdah) is for al-Ghazâlî, as it is for Avicenna, simply the statistically usual or universally constant sequences among a totality of events and occurrences all of which take place as necessarily they must according to the originally predetermined operation of the whole.[112]

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[111] In some cases one event may be said to be the cause of another insofar as the relationship is such that the one juridically determines the status of the other, as, e.g., the intention of the subject may be said to cause the washing (a) to be an act of obedience to God and (b) to be an ablution rather than a mere washing and the washing's being an ablution is the cause of the achievement of the state of ritual purity in the subject. In such cases, however, no entity comes to be, no new existence is realised.

[112] Cf., e.g., Iqtiṣâd, p. 172f. and Iḥyâ' 4, p. 289, 27f. and cp., e.g., al-Quwâ l-nafsâniyya, p. 175, 10f. That the lawful operation of the universal system is in fact inalterable, cf. Iljâm, pp. 20f., discussed below. It is within this context that one has to read some of al-Ghazâlî's statements about the miracles that lie within God's power (e.g., Tahâfut, pp. 277f. and 285f. and Iqtiṣâd, pp. 97f.); i.e., in order to ascertain what al-Ghazâlî actually asserts and what he does not

This is one way of reading the passage and one that plainly suits the immediate context. One might, however, hear the passage as placing the necessity of the «necessary order» at a higher level – not as a necessity that resides originally in the order of sublunary events given the system of the fundamental and univeral causes, but as a necessity that is determinant of the very ordering of the system itself. The same ambivalence that one finds in this passage is manifest also where he says (*Maqṣad*, p. 152, 11-13),

> Thus the whole universe is like a single individual and the parts of the universe are like its limbs; they coöperate with one another towards a single goal, viz., the perfect achievement of the utmost good the existence of which is possible, as is required by the divine liberality.[113]

Elsewhere, as we have seen, al-Ghazâlî identifies God's liberality (*al-jûd*) with His Accomplishment (*al-qaḍâ'*) and so with the created actuality of the universal system as it is operatively determinant of everything that takes place in the sublunary sphere.[114] If, thus, one hears 'God's liberality' here as referring to His creation of the universe as it is, then what is entailed or required by God's liberality will be what occurs necessarily given the creation of the system of permanent, universal causes. We have already noted, however, that in *Maqṣad*, where he deals with the divine name "*al-Wahhâb*" (p. 78), al-Ghazâlî understands God's liberality in terms of the perfection of His being, saying that God does nothing for His own benefit (*li-gharaḍ*) or in expectation of any return (*li-'iwaḍ*). In *Iḥyâ'* he makes a much more radical statement concerning the order of creation and God's liberality, and one that has for centuries caused difficulties for his readers. There al-Ghazâlî says,

> It is the ordering that is necessary and right (*al-tartîbu l-wâjibu l-ḥaqq*) according to what should be (*yanbaghî*) and as it should be and in the measure that should be. There is not in possibility (*fî l-imkân*) anything at all better and more complete and more perfect. If there were ..., [this] would be a niggardliness

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assert, he has carefully to distinguish statements concerning what may lie within God's power. absolutely and in principle, and statements that speak of what miracles are in fact possible given the universal system and «what God knows He will create» (cf., e. g., *ibid*, *Tahâfut*, p. 286, 9ff. and 145, 4).

[113] *Itmâmu ghâyati l-khayri l-mumkini wujûduhû 'alâ mâ qtaḍâhu l-jûdu l-ilâhî*. Note that '*iqtaḍâ*, *yaqtaḍî*', like '*awjaba, yûjibu*' to which it is often equivalent, is used in a number of senses among them (1) to require or entail as the conclusion of a syllogism is entailed by the premises (with this, note al-Ghazâlî's use of '*natîjah*' in '*Iljâm*, p. 21, on which see n. 147 below) and also (2) to cause or to produce.

[114] *Maqṣad*, pp. 105 and 111, cited above. Cf. also *Munqidh*, p. 87, 7f. where he says «At certain times this light flows forth abundantly from God's liberality (*yanbajisu mina l-jûdi l-ilâhî*) and one must be on look for them. As [the Prophet] said, "To your Lord in the time allotted to your lives belong diffusions of His mercy; will you not make yourselves open to them?"». In this context one hears '*al-jûd*' as referring to the system of the universe as it flows from the angel of the outermost sphere. See above *ad Maqṣad*, p. 83, where the same hadîth is cited.

(*bukhl*) that is incompatible with [God's] liberality and an injustice (*zulm*) that is incompatible with [His] justice (*al-'adl*).[115]

The ordering which is here termed necessary and right is plainly not that of events in the sublunary world, but of the universe itself, «the universal, fundamental, permanent, stable causes» which are the causes of the realisation of the utmost good in the contingent events of the sublunary world. The sense of this would seem to be unambiguously confirmed where al-Ghazâlî says, for example, that there is more than one sun in possibility, but that there be only one and that it hold the position it now occupies in the heavens is the best possible arrangement, and so too with all the other universal and permanent causes.[116] «If the order (*al-tartîb*) were altered, then the universal system (*al-niẓâm*) would be vitiated» (*Maqṣad*, p. 81, 17f.). Evil (*al-sharr, al-ḍarar*) exists only as the accidental by-product of the operation of the universal causes in the best possible universe. That is to say, the evil there is so related to the good there is that «if this evil were to be removed, then the good that it entails would be done away with and by its being done away with evil far worse than that which it entails would come about» (*Maqṣad*, p. 68, 7ff.).[117]

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[115] *Iḥyâ'* 4, p. 252, 29ff., with which cp. *Arba'în*, pp. 242f. With this cp. *Ilâhiyyât*, p. 418, 9ff. (= *Najâh*, p. 287, 5f.) and *Ishârât*, p. 188, 8ff. This sort or language with "should be/has to be" (*yanbaghî*) is fairly common with al-Ghazâlî; cf., e. g., *Maqṣad*, p. 100, 8f., p. 105, 16, p. 109, 9, p. 107, 11, p. 126, 14; cp. *'Arshiyya*, p. 16, 24 and p. 17, 9-11, and see below. There is no English expression whose basic sense and range of connotational ambivalence matches that of '*yanbaghî*'; the verb (almost never used in the perfect) has basically the sense of 'is needed' or 'is required' in the sense of what should be, what ought to be, needs to be, and often of what must be or what has to be, most frequently with a view to an end (cf., e. g., al-Qâlî, *K. al-Bâri' fî l-lugha* and Ibn Sîda, s. v.). In some places al-Ghazâlî plainly uses the verb in the sense of "has to" or "must" (e. g., where the necessity of the truth of an inference is concerned, e. g., *Tahâfut*, p. 340, 11) and this connotation is latent in the contexts we are dealing with here. In the present study, I have, in most places, rendered this by 'should' in order that the translation reflect the Arabic word's ambivalence between 'ought' and 'has to'. Concerning the sense of 'right' (*al-ḥaqq*) here, see below. With regard to his use of 'incompatible' (*yunâqiḍ*) here and its connotations, cp. the use of '*natîjah*' in *Iljâm*, pp. 20f., discussed below. The history of the interpretations of this passage of *Iḥyâ'* is detailed in E. Ormsby, *Theodicy in Islamic Thought* (Princeton, 1984), which makes an important contribution to the study of the present topic.

[116] Cf.*Maqṣad*, p. 77, 17ff., p. 107, 7ff. and see also *ibid.*, p. 81, 17ff. and p. 109ff. and cp. *Tahâfut*, pp. 41f. (§§ 36f.). The texts here (particularly *Maqṣad*, p. 77) would seem to settle the long debated issue of the sense of '*fî l-imkân*' in the passage of *Iḥyâ'* 4, p. 252 just cited and which is detailed by Ormsby, *op. cit.*

[117] See also n. 142 below. With this, cp. *Ilâhiyyât*, pp. 417ff. (= *Najâh*, pp. 286ff.). Avicenna discusses this in detail, noting (p. 417, 6ff.) that evil only exists in the sublunary sphere and there only with individuals sometimes (thus not the species as such) and that the sublunary is but a small portion of the universe. «The existence of evil in things is a necessary consequence of the need for the good» (p. 418, 1). Al-Ghazâlî says in *Tahâfut* (p. 41f.) that human beings «lack the power to perceive in their full extent and in detail the various aspects of God's wisdom in creating the universal system, but grasp only some elements of it such as the inclination of the sphere of the zodiac». On the identification of the good with the good of the species rather than with that of individuals, see below.

From these statements two things would appear plainly to follow. First, that al-Ghazâlî does not envision the possibility of God's creating a universe composed either in whole or in part of beings different in kind from those that make up the present universe and second, that He necessarily creates this universe exactly as it is in every detail. That there can be a best possible ordering of the kinds of contingent things whose existence is possible implies that the number of the possible kinds of things that can exist is not infinite and concomitantly that the conditions and causes of their coming to be and of the realisation of their perfections are likewise limited in principle. In *Maqṣad* al-Ghazâlî speaks of the possible as that which of itself does not have existence and is not such as to exist of itself. Contrasting the real or the true (*al-ḥaqq*) as what exists to the unreal (*al-bâṭil*) as what does not exist and the contingent existence of the created to the eternally necessary existence of God, he says,

> The possible in itself (*al-mumkinu bi-dhâtihî*) which is necessary through another is a reality (*ḥaqq*) in one respect and a nullity (*bâṭil*) in another and so, from that respect in which it is connected to what has caused its existence, is existent and in this respect is real, but with respect to itself is a nullity. For this reason, He (the Exalted) says "Everything perishes, save for His face" (Q 28,88)... Since from and unto eternity, every thing other than Him is, in and of itself (*min ḥaythu dhâtihî*), such that existence does not belong to it intrinsically (*lâ yastaḥiqqu l-wujûd*) and is such that from Him it does, it is a nullity (*bâṭil*) of itself and a reality (*ḥaqq*) through another.[118]

The being that al-Ghazâlî says does not belong to the contingently existent possible intrinsically and of itself is the actuality of the particular, the actuality of the concrete instantiation of a possible essence. Following Avicenna, he says that existence is related to the essence of the existent entity as an accident.[119] He does not, however, talk about

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[118] *Maqṣad*, p. 137, 9 ff. The context here is the discussion of "The Truth" (or "The Real") as one of God's names. '*Al-ḥaqq*' is commonly interpreted by the Ashʿarites as the equivalent of 'existent' or 'the truly existent' (cf. *Irshâd*, p. 153, 6 and generally Gimaret, *Noms*, pp. 140 ff.) and, following the ordinary lexical usage (cf., e.g., al-Zajjâj, p. 53), is commonly employed in *kalâm* for "[is] real" or "[is] a fact". Al-Ghazâlî plays with the various senses of the term here and within the context plays also on the overtones of its presence in '*istaḥaqqa, yastaḥiqqu*' (ordinarily "to deserve" but frequently in formal usage "to be such/of such a kind/of such a nature as to"). Al-Ghazâlî's text here is a paraphrase of *Ilâhiyyât*, p. 356, 10 ff., where one has the same play on '*istaḥaqqa*', the same description of the possible as *bâṭil*, and where the same Koran verse is cited. Regarding the intrinsic non-being of the possible and of the contingently existent, cp. *Iḥyâ'* 4, p. 86, 30 f., where he says, «You are something [*shay'* = an existent entity] since the creator of things has made you something, but are nothing when you are of the opinion that you have something which comes from your own being as such» (*min dhâtika*). For an analogous discussion in terms of "light", cf. *Mishkâh*, pp. 53 f. For this opposition of *al-ḥaqq* and *al-bâṭil*, cf. also *Akhbâr al-Ḥallâj*, no. 37. Avicenna often uses '*al-ḥaqq*' to name or to describe his "first principle" (e.g., *Ilâhiyyât*, p. 27, *Commentary on Lambda*, p. 23, 21), the really existent whose existence is not an accident.

[119] «Existence is like the accidental with respect to the intelligible quiddity, since the quiddity can come to be in the mind together with doubt as to whether the particular quiddity has concrete

the ontological origin of essences as such, i. e., of the origin of the being of the possib-
les as possible essences. The possibles are simply given. It would seem that for al-
Ghazâlî, their being as possibles is absolute; they are somehow eternally already and
always there for God in their own givenness, not apart from Him, but in a sense,
nonetheless, independently of Him. God's being is not absolutely prior to the possible
as such, but only to the actual existence of the contingent entities He causes to come
to be in the world. That is to say, the possibles as essences or quiddities instantiations
of which can come to exist in the world, do not originate in God but are eternally
there as givens for God's knowledge. For al-Ghazâlî, thus, God may not, strictly
speaking, be said to create *ex nihilo* but rather *ex possibili*. He causes the existence of
particular instances of essences that are in themselves already there "in possibility".
Note that is not altogether the same sense in which the "first cause" of Avicenna may
be said to create *ex possibili*.[120] According to al-Ghazâlî the world is not eternal and
the possibles, therefore, will have, in themselves, to be prior to the existence of mat-
ter and as such known to God from eternity. The world, including the celestial realm
and matter itself, was created when God first gave actual existence to contingent
entities, sc. to beings whose possibility preceded the first moment of their existence.
Thus al-Ghazâlî says (*Mi'yâr,* p. 167, 10 f.) that creation, properly speaking, is to cre-
ate something «without there being any prior matter in which are its potentiality and
its possibility». Prior to the existence of the world, matter too was possible and was
known to God as such.

One has the impression that al-Ghazâlî may not have seen the metaphysical issue
here and so was unaware of the seriousness of its theological implications. His failure to
raise the problem, however, and to deal with it is as surprising as it is conspicuous, when
one considers its importance and notes that its principal elements had been explicitly set
out and discussed by his Ash'arite predecessors.

4.3. The Necessity of the Universe that God Wills

The second thing that would seem to follow from the texts we have just examined is that
God is not, according to al-Ghazâlî, free with respect to the possible universes that
might be created from the possible kinds of things that are available to Him as the
constituents for a universe. As we have seen, there is a particular order of the possibles
that strictly speaking has to exist (*yanbaghî an yakûn*) if the most perfect realisation of
the possibles in their kinds is to be achieved. The perfection of the system of the uni-
verse and of the ordering of the coming to be of contingent beings is in some way a
measure of God's liberality and His justice.

> He created all the basic classes of existents (*aqsâmu l-mawjûdât*), the corporeal
> and the incorporeal, the perfect and the imperfect. "He has given to each thing

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existence or not» (*al-wujûdu kal-'araḍiyyi bil-iḍâfati ilâ l-mâhiyyah. . .*): *Mi'yâr,* p.57, 8. On
this generally see L. Gardet, *Pensée religieuse d'Avicenne,* pp. 57 ff.

[120] On this see M. Marmura, "The Metaphysics of Efficient Causality in Avicenna", p. 181.

its creation (*khalqahû*)" (Q 20.50) and thereby He is Liberal; He has arranged
them in their appropriate places and thereby He is Just.[121]

The latter two sentences are explanatory of the initial proposition. As in the previous
text, there are two distinct assertions here. In the first, what al-Ghazâlî apparently
states is that God's liberality is that He brings to actual existence each of the possible
kinds of things. He grants to each kind of thing (each specific essence or quiddity) "its
own creation", the actuality of the existence of the form and constitution that belong to
it in itself and as such. This alone is compatible with the divine liberality. The statement
remains somewhat ambivalent, however, as we can understand him to mean by the
verse he quotes either (1) that of each thing, i. e., of each kind or class of the possibles,
God has made at least one concrete instance to exist or (2) that of each kind He has
made to exist all of the instances that should exist. We shall return to this question
shortly.

The second assertion is that God's justice is manifest by His having put things in the
places which are properly theirs.[122] Al-Ghazâlî employs here a traditional Ash'arite
definition of justice and the morally good. In the formulation of abû Ishâq al-Isfarâ'înî,
«justice is to put things in their appropriate places and this is the fundamental sense of
moral goodness (*al-ḥusn*); injustice (*al-jawr*) is to put things in other than their approp-
riate places, and this is the fundamental sense of moral badness (*al-qubḥ*)».[123] As is
clear from the larger context, however, al-Ghazâlî intends it in a sense contrary to that
in which it is normally employed by Ash'arite theologians. In the traditional concep-
tion, that is to say, the appropriate place for anything is that in which God commands it
be put; the good of human action is obedience to God's command, the bad, disobedi-
ence. For any agent, whether God or man, «justice is what he may legitimately do; it is
an attribute that belongs to God essentially»[124] and to men through following the divine
command. God, Who alone commands and forbids, is not Himself subject to command
and prohibition; He may legitimately do whatever He will, wherefore all His actions are
just and good by definition, whatever He do and whatever be its effect. With respect to
God's action, the appropriate place for anything is not related as such either to its
nature or to its relation to or effect upon any other creature, but is determined abso-
lutely by His creating it when and where and as He wills. In al-Ghazâlî's conception,

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[121] *Maqṣad*, p. 105, 15-17. Note the analogous structure p. 106, 9 ff. where he speaks of God as
liberal (*jawâd*) in giving the human body all the parts it has and needs and as just (*'adl*) for
putting each in its proper place. Note also that the citation of Q 20.50 (*a'ṭâ kulla shay'in khal-
qahû thumma hadâ*) – the completion of which any of al-Ghazâlî's readers would hear from the
portion he cited – implicitly carries through here into the statement about liberality with its
second element, "and then gave it right guidance". Cp. also *Maqâṣid* 2, p. 84, where the same
Koran verse is cited and also *Ajrâm*, pp. 51 f.

[122] With this cp. the phrase «*bi-waḍ'ihâ mawâḍi'ahâ l-khâṣṣah*»: *Maqṣad*, p. 106, 10 f.

[123] Fr. no. 94 The same definition is used by al-Mâturîdî, *Tawḥîd*, p. 97.

[124] Al-Bayhaqî, *I'tiqâd*, p. 34; this most common Ash'arite definition of justice or the ethically
good; cf., e. g., *Mujarrad*, pp. 125 and 139 ff., and al-Juwaynî, *Kâmil*, pp. 38 f. That God is not
bound by any ethical rule and that He may command men what He does not will that they do,
cf. the discussion in our "Moral Obligation in Classical Muslim Theology", pp. 214 f.

however, things are quite the opposite. God's will in what He wills to do and what He wills to command is not alone and of itself the sole rule and measure of what is good and what is just. There is, rather, a good of created beings that belongs to them of themselves, by their being each one what essentially it is in itself, and a good therefore too of the created universe as such, since it is composed of the totality of existent contingent essences. Since the possibles do not depend on God for their being as possibles but are already there for Him as essences instances of which He can cause to exist, the measure of the good of what God can create and of what He does create does not have its origin in Him, but stands as an independent measure by which His action is to be judged.[125] It is thus that al-Ghazâlî often speaks of God's action as a realisation of what should be. Concerning the perfection of the order of the universe and of its parts, he says,

> All this is justice; it is as it should be and according to what should be (*kamâ yanbaghî wa-ʿalâ mâ yanbaghî*). If [God] had not made what He made then there would be something else which would result in far greater harm than there is.[126]

The manifest implication of all this is that the appropriate place of each of the "permanent, universal causes", celestial and terrestrial, is that in which it is so related to the rest that from the operation of the whole the greatest good is to be realised. Accordingly, God's justice is realised at the highest level in the ordering of the permanent, universal causes in the best possible way and then in the consequent course of contingent events

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[125] On this see also nn. 123f. above. Al-Ghazâlî's doctrine here may appear to resemble the doctrine of the Muʿtazila according to which God is morally obligated to certain universal rules of ethical good and bad which require that having created men He deal justly with them and, according to the Baghdâd school, that He do what is best for them. The intuitionist deontology of the Muʿtazila, however, is essentially different in conception and in its theological consequences from the basically consequentialist theory based on the good of essential natures that underlies the doctrine of al-Ghazâlî.

[126] *Maqṣad*, p. 109, 8-10 (and cp. also p. 68, 7ff., translated above, and pp. 105f.). ('What ...' here refers to the universal system, the apparatus of universal causes.) It is clear enough from analogous and parallel passages that it is not al-Ghazâlî's intention in the present passage to suggest that God might have created a totally different universe (one containing quite different kinds of things), but only that the arrangement of the kinds of things we know might have been different. "Something else" (*amrun âkhar*) means not another (kind of) entity (*shayʾun âkhar*) but another situation or circumstance. Note the parallel occurrence of the phrase "*ʿalâ mâ yanbaghî wa-kamâ yanbaghî*" in *Iḥyâʾ* 4, p. 252, translated above. With this cp. *ʿArshiyya*, pp. 16f., *Ishârât*, pp. 185f., *Ilâhiyyât*, pp. 414f. (= *Najâh*, pp. 284f.). The assumption that this is the most perfect possible universe would seem almost certainly to be something al-Ghazâlî acquired as an integral element of the metaphysics he adopted from the *falâsifa*. It is interesting to note that while he rejects the emanationist elements of the Neoplatonic metaphysics of al-Fârâbî and Avicenna, he accepts the notion that there can be a best possible universe and that its actuality is a result of God's liberality, something whose theological consequences are far more serious and more obviously incompatible with traditional orthodoxy. This is particularly conspicuous when one considers the cogency of the arguments set out against emanation in *Tahâfut* and the gratuity of his assumption of the perfection of the universe (see, e.g., the citation of *Tahâfut* in n. 132 above).

that necessarily flows from them. It is thus that God "has given to each thing its crea-
tion": He has created the system of universal, enduring causes so that of every kind of
possible He has caused to exist every instance that should exist and exactly in the way
that it must exist if the optimum good is to come to be. Most important, however, is that
according to al-Ghazâlî the fulfillment of the utmost good whose existence is possible is
required by God's liberality.[127] This is plainly contrary to traditional Ash'arite doctrine.

Already al-Ash'arî had said (*Luma'* (A), § 41) that one cannot argue for the eternity
of creation on the premise that if it were not, then God would be niggardly (*bakhîl*).
Similarly, al-Ghazâlî's contemporaries and fellow students under al-Juwaynî, al-Kiyâ
al-Harâsî and abû l-Qâsim al-Ansârî, insist against Avicenna and the *falâsifa* that liber-
ality does not define God's nature and is not a causal principle of His action such that
the world must be eternal.[128] Al-Ghazâlî, as we have seen, holds that it is impossible that
the world have existed eternally. In this he can only hold the traditional teaching. Al-
Ansârî further states, however, that one cannot argue from God's liberality to the thesis
that this is the best possible world.[129] The traditional understanding, followed by al-
Harâsî and al-Ansârî, is that niggardliness, the contrary of liberality, is to withhold or
refuse something that is morally obligated (*man'u l-wâjib*) and that since He is above
command and prohibition it is impossible that any thing be obligatory for God, where-
fore it is impossible that He be niggardly because of anything He might do or not do,
just as it is impossible that any act of His be termed unjust.[130]

As in the case with the question of the effectiveness of secondary causes, we find with
regard to the present topic a number of places in which al-Ghazâlî appears to follow the
traditional teaching of the Ash'arite school and which, therefore, seem to be inconsis-
tent with the texts we have just examined. In *Iqtisâd*, for example, he presents a set of
seven propositions (p. 165) that are subsequently demonstrated and elaborated
(pp. 174ff.), all of which assert that God did not have to create the world as He in fact
created it and that, by implication, it would not have been unjust for Him to have
created it otherwise.[131] According to the first thesis God need not have imposed on men

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[127] E.g., *Maqsad*, p. 152, 13, cited above; and cp. *Ajrâm*, pp. 51f.

[128] Al-Harâsî, foll. 57v° f. and *Ghunya*, fol. 20v°, where the thesis of the eternity of the world is
attributed explicitly to Aristotle. For analogous arguments of the Mu'tazila, cf., e.g., 'Abd al-
Jabbâr, *al-Mughnî* 11, 122ff.

[129] *Op. Cit.*, fol. 176r°. Here with al-Ansârî we are in the context of traditional Ash'arite doctrine.
Note also the analogous denial by 'Abd al-Jabbâr that God's generosity requires that He bring
about what is best (*al-aslah*), e.g., *al-Mughnî* 11, p. 81ff. Against this Avicenna (*Ilâhiyyât*,
p. 380) calls the *mutakallimîn* "*mu'attilah*" (deniers of the reality of God's attributes), using an
expression employed by the Ash'arites in their condemnation of Mu'tazilite teaching.

[130] For this cf., e.g., *Mujarrad*, pp. 125 and 139ff.; this is the argument presented by al-Ansârî
concerning generosity and miserliness in the passage cited in the preceding note. On this
problem, v. our "Two Islamic Views of Human Agency" and more generally concerning the
traditional Ash'arite conception of God's justice, our "Moral Obligation in Classical Muslim
Theology", pp. 207ff. Injustice and niggardliness are associated, as the latter is identified with
withholding what is rightfully due (e.g., *Luma'* (A), §41).

[131] There is analogous material, e.g., in *Fadâ'ih*, pp. 104 and 106 and *Ihyâ'* 1, p. 90 (= *Arbâ'în*,
pp. 19f.), though, for our present interests, not so clearly set forth and discussed.

the revealed law with its promise of reward and threat of punishment. More fully stated (p. 174) the thesis is that

> it would be legitimate for God not to create mankind at all and (a) when He does create them it is not incumbent upon Him and (b) when He creates them it is His not to impose the revealed law upon them and (c) when He does impose it on them this is not incumbent upon Him.

Formally the whole section is directed at the Mu'tazilite position that some things are morally incumbent upon God and at the thesis of the Baghdâd School that it is incumbent upon Him to do what is best and most salutary (al-aṣlaḥ) for His creatures. Al-Ghazâlî's argument here rests primarily on the thesis that no action is incumbent upon God (wâjibun 'alayhî) and in this he appears to follow the traditional teaching of the Ash'arite School completely. To the contrary, however, he sets aside the traditional understanding of 'incumbent' and redefines the term in such a way that the propositions he asserts against the Mu'tazila prove, on examination, to be utter banalities, neither the traditional, credal theses of orthodox Ash'arism nor genuine contraries of the Mu'-tazilite doctrine which he formally pretends to oppose. Al-Ghazâlî's procedure here is interesting, in that it furnishes a clear example of his attitude towards the traditional theology and his utilization of its lexicon and its formulæ. He analyses the expression 'incumbent' ('obligatory' or '[morally] necessary') as being that the performance of which outweighs (yatarajjaḥ) – i.e., is necessary as opposed to – its omission and concludes that «[the meaning] that is specific to the term 'incumbent' is 'that in the omission of which there is some manifest harm'» (Iqtiṣâd, p. 162, 2f.; cf. also ibid., p. 192, 4ff. cited below). In the present context, this definition presents itself as ostensibly based on or as following traditional Ash'arite formulæ, according to which the morally obligatory may be defined as that for the omission of which there is the threat [of divine punishment] or in the omission of which one is at risk of divine punishment or for which one merits divine punishment (e.g., Mujarrad, pp. 185f. and Kâmil, p. 38). In the traditional usage, however, 'is obligatory' is synonymous with 'is commanded' (al-wâjib = al-ma'mûru bihî) and the basic conception of the morally incumbent or obligatory is entirely juridical. What is advantageous is to obey God's commandments. This al-Ghazâlî rejects – tacitly, to be sure, for he was not about to enter into a polemic against traditional orthodoxy, but nonetheless surely – and thereby transforms the juridically obligatory into the prudentially necessary. He rejects, that is, the conception of the morally incumbent as what the chattel is required to do because and only because it is commanded by his master (a master, moreover, who punishes disobedience) and for it substitutes one according to which it is that which, as a matter of prudence, one ought or has to do in his own best interest.[132] By his redefinition of 'wâjib' al-Ghazâlî effectively

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[132] Note that al-Ghazâlî's arguments through this section of Iqtiṣâd tend perhaps to sound more traditional than they are because of the explicit formulation of the original thesis and counter-thesis and also because of the ambivalence of 'wâjib'. One can only admire the way he has managed to maintain a semblance of traditional concepts and constructs while saying something very different from them. In the present context, e.g., note the formulation, «ma'nâ l-

does away with the foundation of the traditional thesis that 'obligatory' cannot be applicable to the actions of God because He is not subject to the command of another. What he asserts, rather, is the banality that because God's being transcends benefit and harm, it is impossible that, in order to avoid some harm to Himself, He find it necessary, to create mankind or to benefit them. As originally conceived, the Muʿtazilite theses which al-Ghazâlî ostensibly means to discuss and to refute are directly pertinent to the issue of whether or not one can speak of what is and is not compatible with God's nature, i. e., with His liberality and His justice. Al-Ghazâlî, however, dialectically turns the Muʿtazilite counter-position into a mere straw man and thereby avoids having to commit himself on the main issue. He makes a number of points that may tend to give the impression of thoroughness and profundity in his treatment of the question here, but which have primarily the effect of distracting the reader's attention from his avoidance of the most important issues involved in his differences with the traditional teaching. He says thus (p. 175) that in his usage 'wâjib' has to be distinguished from what is «necessary» as being given in God's eternal knowledge. So too, he avoids the issue with regard to the question of men's meriting reward and punishment (p. 177, 4ff.) and consequently does not commit himself to the traditional dogma that men's actions are related to their status in the next life only accidentally. So also, again playing on the ambivalence of 'wâjib', he says (p. 195, 10) that for God «to send prophets is possible (jâʾiz) and is neither impossible (muḥâl) nor necessary (wâjib)», again making an assertion that dodges the question of whether God could in fact have done otherwise. In sum, al-Ghazâlî systematically avoids having to commit himself as to whether or not it was concretely possible either that God have created nothing at all or that He have created a universe in whatever respect other than that which we know or that He not have done what was best for His creatures (sc., create the best possible universe).

Consistently with his own doctrine of the temporal creation of the world, then, al-Ghazâlî understands God's liberality as entailing the creation of everything that can exist. Because of God's justice this is to require or entail (iqtaḍâ) the utmost good the existence of which is possible (Maqṣad, p. 152).[133] God's liberality is concretely realised and made manifest in the system of the universe, the universal, permanent causes, and above all in the creation of the Throne, from which the entire order of the universe in a sense derives and by which it is governed. In brief, that the divine liberality cannot entail that the universe have existed from eternity, does not have to mean, for al-Ghazâlî, that it does not entail God's creating this temporal universe necessarily. The question we have to answer, therefore, is whether the entailment of the existence of everything that can exist in the best possible universe is absolute or conditional.

In Maqṣad (p. 47) al-Ghazâlî says that the essential characteristic of God is that «He

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wujûbî tarjîḥu jânibi l-fiʿli ʿalâ l-tarki bi-dafʿi ḍararin mawhûmin aw-maʿlûmin fa-idhâ kâna hâdhâ huwa l-wujûbu fal-mûjibu huwa l-murajjiḥu wa-huwa llâh», the universality of whose application within al-Ghazâlî's system is remarkable.

[133] The statement «He is liberal insofar as he causes the existence [of things]» (Maqṣad, p. 111, 4f.), taken by itself, seems to reflect traditional orthodoxy; read, however, in the larger context of the work (cf., e. g., p. 97, 11 and p. 103, 6 cited above), its meaning is incompatible with traditional Ashʿarite doctrine.

is the existent whose existence is necessary in itself and from which exists everything whose existence is in possibility» (*al-mawjûdu l-wâjibu l-wujûdi l-ladhî 'anhu yûjadu kullu mâ fî l-imkâni wujûduhû*). The formulation evokes the usage of Avicenna. Conspicuously, however, al-Ghazâlî does not add the note that the being that of itself (*bi-dhâtihî*) necessarily exists exists necessarily in every aspect of its being (*min kulli jihâtihî*).[134] He does not, that is, say any thing here that would directly state or imply that God, of His very nature, must create either this world or anything at all. Elsewhere he strenuously rejects the proposition that creation takes place as a direct and inevitable consequence of God's being, «like light from the sun or heating from fire» (e. g., *Tahâfut*, pp. 96 ff. and 155 ff., where he also protests the reduction of God's will to His knowledge and so to His essence). Still, the exact meaning and significance of the present text is not altogether clear, especially in view of the texts we have just examined. When, a few pages later (*Maqsad*, p. 50), he elaborates on the formulation, he discusses the expression '*wâjibu l-wujûd*' but when he comes to the second part of the description he paraphrases 'from which exists everything whose existence is in possibility' simply by «every existent exists from it» (*yûjadu 'anhu kullu mawjûd*), which fails to give unambiguous clarification to the '*everything* whose existence is in possibility'. Since, in any event, the phrase 'from which exists everything whose existence is in possibility' occurs twice (pp. 47 and 50) and is paralleled elsewhere in his works, we cannot but conclude that he means it. Is it then conceivable, according to al-Ghazâlî, that God not have willed to create anything at all?

The distinction between what is possible (*maqdûr, jâ'iz, mumkin*) absolutely speaking, sc., that which God has the absolute power to create since it is not as such impossible (*muhâl*), and that which is possible in itself but in fact impossible since God does not will it (or because He wills that it not exist) was long recognized and discussed by Ash'arite theologians.[135] Generally they make it quite clear that God could have created the universe other than as He did (e. g., *Mujarrad*, pp. 72, 13 ff. and 246, 12 ff.). One finds in the works of the earlier Ash'arites, however, a number of statements that are somewhat troublesome in that they may appear, at least on first reading, to suggest that God cannot create but what He does create. It is said, for example, that God wills everything that can be willed (*kullu shay'in yajûzu an yurâd: Luma'* (A), §§ 49 and 65) and that «the eternal volition has as its object every thing of which it is possible that it be

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[134] Cf., e. g., *Ilâhiyyât*, p. 403, 13-15 (= *Najâh*, p. 275, 1-3) and cp. *Miy'âr*, p. 195, 4, discussed below. Note that in the formulation of al-Ghazâlî, one could read *yûjadu* from '*awjada*' and so render "from which is caused to exist . . .". Further, note that the formulation employed here (and later on, p. 50) could be read in a quite traditional way, given that the Ash'arites hold that God exists necessarily and commonly identify what it is to be God (*al-ilâhiyyah*) as to have the power to create. In the context, however, largely because of the vocabulary and style of *Maq-sad*, the formulation evokes the language and doctrine of Avicenna, more than that of the Ash'arite manuals.

[135] Cf., e. g., *Tamhîd*, §§ 565 f. and *Ghunya*, foll. 144v° and 67r° and generally al-Harâsî, foll. 192v° f. According to some (e. g., Ibn Fûrak and abû Ishâq al-Isfarâ'înî) God wills not only that what is to be shall be but that what is not to be shall not be; cf., e. g., *Ghunya*, fol. 71r°, 19. See also the references cited in n. 137 below.

willed».[136] God «wills the coming to be of things in accordance with His foreknowledge of their coming to be; He wills the coming to be of that of which it is known that it will come to be and the non-existence of that of which it is known that it will not come to be».[137] By themselves, however, these statements are not self-explanatory. They have to be read within the broader theological context to which they belong and against the background of the controversies they mean to address.

According to the Ash'arites, volition is that by which an agent determines that a possible act or event actually take place at a particular time and in a particular place. It is because things come to be and events take place in the world in particular sequences and relations to one another that we know that God, who creates everything, wills.[138] Furthermore, God wills individually the coming to be of all contingent entities and events that actually come to be (e.g., *Irshâd*, p. 237, *ult.*), for if anything that God does not will can occur in the created universe, then He is not truly omnipotent and so cannot be the creator (e.g., *Luma'* (A), §§ 49f. and *Tamhîd*, § 477). The Mu'tazila, however, taught that human volitions and men's intentional actions are neither created by God

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[136] *Tata'allaqu bi-kulli mâ yaṣiḥḥu an yakûna murâdan: Shâmil* (69), p. 271, 14. (Add on this page, following *lâ yazâlu* in line 12, *fa-'ani l-ilzâmi jawâbâni, aḥaduhumâ an naqûla innamâ yataḥaq-qaqu l-'adamu fîmâ lâ yazâlu*, following Tehran University Central Library MS no. 350.) Arguing that God does not will *per se* (*li-nafsihî*), al-Juwaynî says in his *Luma'* (p. 139) that God does not will everything that can be willed (*kullu murâd*) any more than He creates every possible being. In al-Juwaynî's context, however, 'what can be willed' has a different sense from the one with which we are concerned and refers to the class of all possible objects of God's will. Note that the few remarks we have to present here are meant only to sort out what exactly is meant by these and analogous statements that are found in the texts of the classical period. The general question of how the possibles and their relation to God's knowledge and His will were understood by al-Ghazâlî's predecessors in the Ash'arite school requires a separate, detailed study.

[137] *Mujarrad*, p. 74, 12f; it is impossible «that anything come to be in His dominion save that its coming to be is known before it comes to be ... and the case of that whose coming to be is known with respect to the necessity of its coming to be is the same as that whose coming to be is willed with respect to the necessity of its coming to be in accordance with [God's] will» (*ibid.*, p. 74, 14ff.); cf. also *ibid.*, p. 45, 15ff., p. 71, 22f., p. 98, 8ff., *Mushkil*, p. 15, 8, al-Isfarâ'înî, *'Aqîda*, § 11, 10 and Fr. 72, *Laṭâ'if* 2, p. 224 (*ad* 7.30) and 5, p. 141 (*ad* 32.13), *Fuṣûl*, p. 69, 11f. (where read *'alim* for *'alîm*), and Baghdâdî, *Uṣûl*, p. 145. The basic formulation is found already with ibn Hanbal, as he is reported to have said «*'ilmu llâhi mâḍin fî khalqihî bi-mashî'-atin minhû ...*»: ibn abî Ya'lâ, *Ṭabaqât al-Ḥanâbila* (Cairo, 1371/1952) 1, p. 25, 5.

[138] Cf., e.g., *Tamhîd*, § 49, *Inṣâf*, p. 36, 18ff., *Irshâd*, p. 64 (on which see al-Anṣârî's *Sharh*, foll. 29r° ff.); *I'tiqâd*, pp. 91f.; thus too *Taḥbîr*, foll. 110v° f.: «The way we know that God wills and intends is that his acts are ordered relative to one another in existence and are characterised by having particular status and no others; it is known that but for the intention of some one who intends that the earlier be earlier and the later later [they would not be so] and otherwise too there would be no more reason for their being characterised by some particular status rather than others ...». Basic to the traditional thesis and the arguments employed to support it is the assumption that God might have willed to create things differently or not to create anything at all. The most conspicuous difference of this from al-Ghazâlî's position, thus, is that the latter's overall context excludes both the occasionalism and the radical voluntarism of classical Ash'arism.

nor foreordained by His eternally prior knowledge of them; on the contrary, they are the autonomous "creations" of their human agents. Most importantly for our present context, they held that God does not will the wrongful actions of men.[139] Thus, since human and angelic volitions and their realised objects are contingent events, we find in the Ash'arite works statements formulated against the Mu'tazila in which it is explicitly stated that God wills everything that is willed (*jamī'u l-murādāt*), i.e., His own acts and those that are the realised objects of human volitions too.[140] It is the will which determines that a given event shall take place at a particular time and place. Consequently, since God is uniquely the creator of whatever takes place in the universe, human volitions and human actions included, what He does not will cannot be willed. This is the sense of the statement that He wills every being that can be willed. The Ash'arites insist, moreover, that anyone who wills what he knows will not happen or what he thinks will not occur is not said properly to will (*murīd*) anything, but only to long for something (*mutamannī*; cf., e.g., *Luma'* (A), § 63, *Mujarrad*, p. 45, 6f. and p. 70, 8f. and al-Isfarā'īnī, Fr. 72). Such longing (*al-tamannī*) characteristically has as its object the action of another, whether God's or that of another created agent. God, therefore, cannot be *mutamannī*. He is the true agent and creator of every entity and event that comes to be in the world and His knowledge is infinite; strictly speaking there is no agent (*fā'il*) other than God, so that it makes no sense to speak of His wishing that another agent do or not do something. As He knows the future volitions and actions of men, so also He wills them and creates them all. Statements to the effect that God wills the existence of what He knows will come to be and that He does not will the existence (or wills the non-existence) of what He knows will not come to be are originally formulated, thus, against the Mu'tazilite thesis that God knows the future disobediences of men but does not will them to occur. They are meant to assert simply that the class of events that eternally God knows are to take place is in every respect identical to that of those events which He eternally wills to create and eventually does create. They are not meant to suggest that the entire future course of creation is somehow given in God's eternal knowledge as the predetermined object for His will, for such a problem is neither addressed nor envisioned. The basic sense of this is clear enough in the state-

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[139] The Mu'tazila conceived the will and its role differently than did the Ash'arites, holding that volition's function is to determine the modality of the occurrence of the event in such a way as to determine its secondary characteristics. On this and concerning the question of human agency generally according to the Mu'tazila, cf. R. Frank, "The Autonomy of the Human Agent", *le Muséon* 95 (1982), pp. 323 ff. That God does not will the wrongful acts of men, cf., e.g., 'Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī* 6/2, pp. 296 ff. According to the Mu'tazilite conception, God cannot, strictly speaking, be said to will human actions at all. For the Ash'arites, because of their doctrine of the universal effectiveness of God's eternal will, the question of how it is that God commands what He does not will and wills what He does not command becomes a major topic of discussion. It should be recalled here that neither of the two schools seems ever completely to have succeeded in conceiving God as wholly above and outside the temporal framework of our material universe. For this reason there are a number of theological difficulties that they were never able to resolve completely.

[140] E.g., *Inṣāf*, p. 36, 12, al-Isfarā'īnī, *'Aqīda*, § IV, 24, al-Mutawallī, p. 23, 19., al-Fūrakī, fol. 101v°, 9, and *Ikhtiṣār*, fo. 93r°, 3 ff.

ment of al-Qushayrî, who says in commenting Q 32.13, where he explicitly addresses the Mu'tazilite thesis that God does not will the actions of men and their consequences, (*Laṭâ'if* 5, p. 141),

> "If we had wished we should have given each soul its guidance ...": if we had wished we should have made the way for inferring the conclusion [i.e., for attaining rational knowledge requisite for valid religious belief] and should have given our aid to each one continuously, but ... we willed that there be residents of the fire just as we willed that there be inhabitants of paradise; since we knew on the day we created paradise that one group of people would inhabit it and on the day we created the fire that one group would descend into it, so it would be impossible (*mina l-muḥâl*) that we will that what we know [is to take place] not take place; if it did not take place it would not be knowledge and if that were not knowledge, we should not be God and it is impossible that we will that we not be God.[141]

At the end of *Mi'yâr*, in a chapter dealing with «the division of existence into the possible and the necessary» (p. 195, 3 ff.), al-Ghazâlî says,

> That which in itself exists necessarily must be necessarily existent in all its aspects so that neither is it a substrate for things that come to be nor is it subject to alteration, wherefore it has no volition that comes to be subsequently (*muntaẓarah*) nor any cognition that comes to be subsequently nor any attribute whatsoever that comes to be subsequent to its existence.

Here, with the phrase 'necessarily existent in all its aspects' (*wâjibu l-wujûdi fî jamî'i jihâtihî*) al-Ghazâlî would seem intentionally to mimic the language of Avicenna (see n. 134 above). On the other hand, if the 'comes to be subsequently' is meant to explain fully and completely the sense of 'must be necessarily existent in all its aspects', then '*wâjib*' may be intended simply as a synonym of '*qadîm*' and means that the act of God's will is eternal without necessarily implying that He wills necessarily what He wills.[142]

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[141] Concerning the argument see the references in n. 104 above. Note the contrast between this and al-Ash'arî's exegesis of the same verse (reported in *Mujarrad*, p. 72), which addresses the possibility that God have willed to do other than what He does. That God does not act by his nature («like the *ṭabâ'i'* according to the doctrine of those who assert their existence»), cf. al-Isfarâ'înî, Fr. 11.

[142] In this case the assertion will be essentially equivalent to that of al-Anṣârî where he says (*Ghunya*, fol. 29r°, 9 f.): «*wujûdu l-ilâhi lâ yu'qal dûna ṣifâti dhâtihî lâ li-kawnihâ min ṣifâti nafsihî bal li-wujûbi wujûdihâ wa-li-dhâtihâ*». Because of the context and the way it is formulated, there is nothing in al-Anṣârî's statement, however, that carries ambiguity of al-Ghazâlî's '*fî jamî'i jihâtihî*'. It should be recalled that al-Juwaynî, among others, understood '*qadîm*', when predicated of God, to mean "whose existence is necessary" (*wâjibu l-wujûd*) (see references above, nn. 15 f.), following the more common Ash'arite analysis of the term as "whose non-existence is impossible" (*al-mustaḥîlu 'adamuhû*). Basically, however, the word is understood to mean when said of God "has no beginning" and accordingly '*wâjib*' is not simply

Though this may perhaps be all he means to assert in the immediate context, one cannot be sure that this is the whole of his understanding of what it means for God to exist necessarily in all aspects of His being. The question of the necessity of God's will is not mentioned, but neither is that of the eternity of the world, for he goes on to say that it was not his intention here to give «a clear exposition of the details of matters» (p. 195, 12 f.).

One finds a somewhat analogous problem in *Iqtiṣâd*. There, in discussing the ontological status of the contingently existent with respect to God's power al-Ghazâlî raises the question of whether the existence of the contrary of what God knows He will create (*khilâfu l-maʿlûm*) is possible or not (*Iqtiṣâd*, p. 83, 6) and goes on to state that the existence of the world can be viewed as either (1) necessary or (2) impossible or (3) merely possible. Elaborating this he says (*ibid*, p. 84, 2 ff.),

> (1) The world is necessary insofar as when one assumes that the will of the Eternal exists in a necessary existence then its object (*al-murâd*) also must be necessary, not simply possible, since given the fact of the existence of the eternal will, the non-existence of its object is impossible. (2) It is impossible in the following way, namely, that if one posited hypothetically that [God's] will does not have as its object [the world's] being caused to exist, then its coming to be would have to be impossible, since it would entail the coming to be of a contingent being without a cause and this is universally recognized as being impossible. (3) It is possible in the following way, namely, that one look at the thing itself (*dhât*) alone and consider with it neither the existence nor the non-existence of [God's] will; it will then be described as possible.[143] Thus there are three ways to take it. *The First* is to stipulate the existence of [God's] will and its relationship to its object; taken in this way it is necessary. *The Second* is to take it that [God's] will is lacking; taken in this way it is impossible. *The Third* is to exclude any consideration of [God's] will and of the cause and so not to take it [sc., the cause] either to exist or not to exist but to look exclusively at the world itself (*dhâtu l-ʿâlam*); taken this way, the third option remains, viz., possibility. By this we mean that it is possible in itself (*mumkinun bi-dhâtihî*).

The first formulation of the first proposition appears to assert that God necessarily wills what He wills and, by implication, therefore, could not have willed other than what He in fact wills. This, however, is contrary to common sunnî doctrine and for this reason one tends to feel that al-Ghazâlî really oughtn't, and therefore does not, mean to make such an assertion. The passage can be read otherwise, but which reading is the more plausible? In the first presentation of the three propositions, the third involves only a

synonymous with '*qadîm*' and is interchangeable with it only in particular contexts. In traditional Ashʿarite works necessary existence is normally predicated of God, but not of His attributes.

[143] «*Fa-yakûnu lahû waṣfu l-imkân*» here might also be translated "it will then have the property of possibility"; for al-Ghazâlî's use of '*waṣf*' as an equivalent of '*ṣifah*', cf., e. g., *Ihyâ'* 1, p. 108, 30 (=*Qudsiyya*, p. 85, 23) and 3, p. 3, 18 f.

looking (*nazar*) at an essence or "thing's self", a consideration (*i'tibâr*) of it under one aspect to the exclusion of all others.[144] The second, by contrast, demands a counterfactual hypothesis and is plainly labled so: «*law quddira 'adamu ta'alluq . . .*».[145] The first, however, is not cast as a hypothetical, much less as a counterfactual, but is formulated with a simple temporal antecedent, «*idhâ furidati l-irâdatu . . .*». The sentence might, in principle, be analysed as implicitly conditional (taking the 'when' to imply or to be equivalent to 'if', as is sometimes the case with '*idhâ*'), though one might, for that matter, hear and render 'since one assumes'. As it occurs here, however, set off against and in contrast to the counterfactual of the second and the mere abstraction of the third, the sentence would seem to assert a conclusion that the author takes to be the fact. This would seem to be confirmed by the use of '*tahaqquq*' (the fact).[146] 'Will' (*al-irâdah*), moreover, has plainly to be understood in both places here as referring to the determinant act of the divine will, not simply God's will as an attribute of His being. The distinction is made and both are named in the succeeding paraphrase, «the existence of [God's] will and its relationship to its object» (*wujûdu l-irâdati wa-ta'alluquhâ*).[147] In the second presentation of his three ways of looking at the matter, the first proposition

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[144] The possible, as such and in itself, is equally disposed (stands in an equivalent relation of indifference) to existence and to non-existence; it is by its relation to another that it is determined to existence or non-existence: cf., e. g., '*Arshiyya*, p. 14, 7f. and *Ishârât*, p. 153, 9ff.

[145] The Arabic wording of the second proposition ('*adamu ta'alluqi l-irâdati bi-îjâdihî*) defies direct representation (i. e., literal translation) in reasonable English. '*Ta'alluq*' here is the will's having its object or the relationship of the will to its object as such, i. e., its relationship to 'its being caused to be' (or, by an alternate rendering, to 'causing it to be'); in the first proposition of the second series the object, sc., the creation of the world, is directly implied.

[146] '*Idhâ*' (when) may be understood as implicitly conditional and the word is often, even if incorrectly, employed in the sense of 'if'. Properly, however, it is strictly temporal and is not used for genuinely conditional antecedents; cf., e. g., al-Mubarrad, *al-Muqtadab* 2, p. 56. The variant wording of the three propositions, even so, gives the impression that in the first he speaks of one's recognizing and taking for granted what is the fact, in the second the counterfactual supposition of what is not, and in the third simply a speculative look at the essence of something. One has, nevertheless, to beware of overinterpreting the significance of the conjunctions. An analogous sequence, "*idhâ . . ., in . . ., in . . .*" occurs in *Mishkâh*, p. 65, 13ff. (translated above), where also the change from a temporal to a conditional conjunction may be pertinent to the context, as the first involves the name or description of the thing as it is in itself and the latter two as it is viewed in relation to others. '*Tahaqqaqa, yatahaqqaqu*' in the meaning "to be the case", "to be the fact" is quite common; for its use with '*wujûd*' in the meaning "to be actual", cf., e. g., *Ikhtisâr*, fol. 146r, 7f. and 21.

[147] One might be tempted to find a significant (and altogether appropriate) distinction drawn here as al-Ghazâlî employs '*'adamu ta'alluqi l-irâdah*' in the first formulation of the second proposition and '*wujûdu l-irâdati wa-ta'alluquhâ*' in the second formulation of the first proposition. The fact is, however, that no distinction between God's will as such and God's will as directed to its object is made in the first statement of the first proposition, where he speaks of the necessary existence of God's will. That it is omitted also in the second formulation of the counterfactual, moreover, makes it clear enough that even if the distinction is expressed here (i. e., even if the introduction of '*ta'alluq*' in two places is not simply in order to vary the wording), it plays no role either in the reasoning or the assertions that are made.

is restated so as to make its logical form explicit. In view of al-Ghazâlî's stylistic habits and his methods of "withholding knowledge from the unworthy" the paraphrase can hardly be taken as unambiguously implying that he takes the antecedent of the first formulation to be purely hypothetical. Most notable, however, is the very presence of «exists in a necessary existence» (*mawjûdatun wujûdan wâjiban*) and it is this which gives rise to the other questions. The sentence makes no sense if the phrase describes "the will of the eternal" simply as an attribute of God and not the determinant act of God's will. There was, however, no need whatsoever, merely in order to assert that the existence of the world is necessary if and when God wills to create it, for al-Ghazâlî to raise the question of whether or not God wills necessarily what He wills. One notes that whereas he adds this note here in the context of the discussion of the divine attributes in a theological manual, he does not do so in a closely parallel statement concerning «the division of existence into the possible and the necessary» in the formally logical context of *Mi'yâr*, where he says, «the existence of the world is necessary when we assume that the eternal will has its existence as its object» (p. 193 f. and cf. *ibid*, p. 166, 17 ff.). In the latter formulation there is no suggestion that the determination of God's will is necessary as such.

That God wills necessarily to create what He creates seems to be stated forthrightly in *Iljâm* (pp. 20 f.). There, having said that God «creates no form in the world until he has first created it in the Throne», al-Ghazâlî raises the question of whether this is necessary and says,

> We often hesitate with regard to the assertion of this relationship of the Throne to God, i.e., whether it may be something necessary in itself or is simply the way in which God (He is exalted) makes things happen according to His custom and habit (*ajrâ bihî sunnatahû wa-'âdatahû*), even if its contrary is not impossible, just as, with regard to the character of the human mind, He has made it His habit (*ajrâ 'âdatahû*) that it cannot dispose anything (*lâ yumkinuhu l-tadbîr*) [sc. in governing the body] save by the mediation of the brain, even though it lies within God's power (He is exalted) to make it able to do this (*tamkînuhû minhû*) without the brain, if His eternal will had foreordained it and the eternal word, which is His knowledge, had determined it so (*law sabaqat bihî irâdatuhu l-azaliyyatu wa-ḥaqqat bihi l-kalimatu l-qadîmatu l-latî hiya 'ilmuhû*). Thus its contrary is excluded (*mumtani'*) not for any incompleteness in God's power itself (*li-quṣûrin fî dhâti l-qudrah*) but rather because of the impossibility of what is contrary to the eternal will and the eternal foreknowledge. For this reason He says, "You shall never find any substitution in the custom of God" (Q 35.43 and 48.23); it admits of no substitution simply because of its necessity and its necessity is simply because it proceeds from an eternal and necessary volition and the result (*natîjah*) of the necessary is necessary and its contrary is impossible.

Here, as in the previous passage, the addition of the remark concerning the necessity of God's will seems superfluous in the immediate context in that the basic distinction he needed to make was adequately stated before the introduction of the citation of *Fâṭir*,

v. 43.[148] '*Wâjibah*', moreover, is hardly to be taken as a mere synonym for '*qadîmah*' since it would then be redundant with '*azaliyyah*'; '*'an irâdatin azaliyyatin wâjibatin*', indeed, may be paraphrased by '*'an irâdatin lam tazal wâjibah*': 'from an eternally necessary volition'. In the present passage he is talking specifically about the relationship of the first and highest of the universal, permanent causes to the rest of the universe: it is necessary, not in itself, but in its cause, sc., because God has willed it. The nature and the activity of every lower cause is, as it were, programmed into and flows from the highest created being and it is the invariant consistency of the operation of the universal causes that is God's custom and His habit.[149] They are «the determination of the Lord of Lords and of Him who makes the causes to function as causes» (*Ihyâ'* 4, p. 95). This is consistent with the passage of *Iqtisâd* which we just examined. We have seen also that according to al-Ghazâlî it is not possible, given God's liberality and His justice, that He have willed to create any universe other than the one which He did create. The present text, however, seems to go well beyond this, for if the act of God's will to create this universe is eternally necessary, then not only is it impossible that He have created a different world, but it is also impossible that He not have created anything at all. Given God's existence, the existence of this world is necessary in its every aspect. To put it another way, one may be able abstractly to consider or to talk about God's existence apart from that of the world, but he cannot posit the existence of God without thereby positing that of the world. Al-Ghazâlî's use of 'product' (*natîjah*) in the present context is interesting, for again his formulation appears to follow and to emend that of Avicenna, who speaks in *'Arshiyya* (p. 17, 10) of creation as «the product of the foreknowledge of the system of the whole» (*natîjatu l-'ilmi l-sâbiqi bi-nizâmi l-kull*) and says (*ibid*, p. 16, 21) that God's acts «are the products of His attributes» (*natâ'iju sifâtihî*), which are essential (*li-dhâtihî*).[150] Al-Ghazâlî refuses to identify God's will

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[148] In the discussion of possible and necessary existence in *Mi'yâr* parallel to that of *Iqtisâd*, p. 84f., he employs only one term, *azaliyyah*', «*fal-'âlamu wâjibun mahmâ faradnâ l-mashî'ata l-azaliyyata muta'alliqatan bi-wujûdihî*» (the world is necessary when we assume that the eternal will has its existence as its object: p. 194, 2f.).

[149] With this cp. *Ihyâ'* 4, p. 248, 2: «The upper world (*'âlamu l-malakût*) is from God and for this reason you shall find in it no variation and inconsistency at all» (*lâ tajidu fîhi khtilâfan wa-tadâddan aslan*). He quotes Q 35.43 also in regard to the psychology of the human soul (*ibid.*, p. 289, 27, cited above). On the background of the formulation here cp. *Latâ'if* 3, p. 94 (*ad* 10.33). Al-Ghazâlî's use of Q 35.43 here is to be compared with its use in the argument of his opponent in *Tahâfut*, p. 372 and similarly his use of Q 45.50 to describe God's originating Determination and Command in *Maqsad* should be set alongside its occurrence in the same passage of *Tahâfut*; the contrasts are illustrative of the very subtle interaction between al-Ghazâlî and Avicenna. For the opponent of *Tahâfut* these verses assert that the world must exist eternally and always the same and for al-Ghazâlî that the laws of the cosmos are necessarily as they are and are invariant and unalterable now, i.e., since the beginning and "until the document shall reach its term".

[150] Cp. al-Ghazâlî's use of the word in *Mîzân*, p. 40, 7f., where he says «actions are the products of moral character (*natâ'iju l-akhlâq*), just as descending downwards is the product of natural weight». This use of the word is frequent in ethical contexts (cf., e.g., *Latâ'if* 1, p. 119, 4, p. 20, and 5, p. 320), but al-Ghazâlî's addition of the physical analogy gives an altogether different connotation to the 'product' than is usual. '*Natîjah*' is a common word for the product, result,

with His knowledge and so, as it were, emends 'the product of the foreknowledge' against Avicenna so as to assert that the existence and the order of the universe is the product of God's will. What he appears to do, in effect, is to relocate the eternal necessity of God's action in an attribute that is somehow distinct from His being itself (*dhâtuhû*) in such a way as to retain the eternal necessity that He create what He creates while avoiding the implication that God necessarily acts eternally. There is here a curious inversion of language against Avicenna, as al-Ghazâlî can say, given his own definition of the terms, that creation (*al-khalq*) is eternal and necessary though it is impossible that the universe have existed from eternity; God's Determination (*al-taqdîr = al-khalq*) is eternal and necessary though the universe has existed for only a finite period of time.

4.4. God's Knowledge, Will, and Power:
A Dialogue with Avicenna

Does al-Ghazâlî really mean to suggest that God could not have chosen not to create anything at all? There is one place in which he seems to suggest that it was not necessary that God choose to create rather than not to create. In discussing the Names, "*al-Qâdir*" and "*al-Muqtadir*" (*Maqṣad*, p. 145), he says,

outcome, etc., of something. The verb, '*nataja, yantiju*' originally means to give birth (primarily of animals; cf. e. g., *Maqâyîs*, s. v.), but is extended to many senses of yielding and producing. Thus al-Juwaynî says in *Niẓâmiyya* (p. 49, 12f.) that «the [human] power of acting is created directly by God (*khalqu llâhi btidâ'an*) and its object is ascribed to Him as willing and knowing and creating and perduring in that it is the result of that which He alone creates» (*natîjatu mâ nfarada bi-khalqihî*). I. e., God alone creates the human agent's *qudrah* and since it is because of its occurrence in relation to the agent's *qudrah* that the event is formally his action, then its being his action is the result of something God alone creates. (Note that what al-Juwaynî has to say in this work differs notably from his teaching in *Irshâd* and his other *kalâm* works.) There are several things that are worth noting with regard to the rhetoric of *Iljâm*, pp. 20f. '*Ṣadara, yaṣduru*' (here 'proceeds' in «proceeds from an eternal . . . volition») is used rather broadly for many kinds of occurrences and is found rather frequently in *kalâm* contexts where one speaks of the relation of actions to the will, both with reference to God and to human agents, as in «*al-af'âlu l-ṣâdiratu 'ani l-irâdah*» (*Mushkil*, p. 260, 2.; cf. also, e. g., *ibid*, p. 100f. and *Laṭâ'if* 4, 61 [*ad* 18.23f.]). It is used also by Avicenna (e. g., in '*Arshiyya*, pp. 14f. and *Ilâhiyyât*, p. 267, 6f.) to describe causal relationships. Because of their lexical connotations, the use of '*al-natîjah*' here alongside the 'proceeds from' of «*li-ṣudûrihâ 'an irâdatin azaliyyatin wâjibah*» is itself interesting. '*Natîjah*' is also, however, the formal expression for the conclusion of a syllogism in the lexicon of the *falâsifa*. Here, then, one notes that al-Ghazâlî passes from speaking of the impossibility of the contrary (*khilâf*) employing a word (sc., '*mumtaniʿ*') which is normally used of what is circumstantially impossible or excluded and goes on to speak of the impossibility of what is contrary to the eternal will, using a word (sc., '*istiḥâlah*') that is commonly used of logical impossibility and then ends by speaking of the world as the *natîjah* of God's eternal will and, for the contrary which is impossible (*muḥâl*), employs a word (sc., '*al-naqîḍ*') that is commonly used for the logically contradictory. (Note also the analogous use of '*nâqaḍa, yunâqiḍu*' where he speaks of what is incompatible with God's liberality and with His justice in *Iḥyâ*' 4, p. 252, translated above.) Thus the *ṣudûr*, the coming forth of the world from God's knowledge and will, is an *iqtiḍâ*' (an entailment) in every sense.

'*Al-qudrah*' is an expression for the attribute by which a thing is caused to exist
in a determined way by the determination of knowledge and will (*muqtadiran
bi-taqdîri l-irâdati wal-'ilm*) and in accord with them. The *Qâdir* is the one who
acts if he wills and if he does not will does not act. It is not a part of the condition
that He must inevitably will. God has the power to bring about the resurrection
now, since if He willed He would bring it about. Thus, if He does not bring it
about now, it is because He has not willed it and does not will it because of the
determination of its appointed time and moment which are fixed in His fore-
knowlege (*mâ jarâ fî sâbiqi 'ilmihî min ajalihâ wa-waqtihâ*).

The sentence, «It is not a part of the condition that He must inevitably will» (*laysa min
sharṭihî an yashâ'a lâ maḥâlah*) might be taken to suggest that it is possible that God not
have willed to create anything at all.[151] The matter is not immediately clear, however.
We have here another instance of al-Ghazâlî's introduction of a statement that does not
seem altogether required in the immediate context. It is not necessary, that is, for an
adequate summary of that basic meaning of the two divine names which al-Ghazâlî
wishes to sketch and is, in any case, something that is not normally included in the
discussion of these names in the standard Ash'arite manuals. In order to ascertain
exactly what he might have meant to assert in adding the statement, we must see why he
raised the question at all.

Howbeit the lexicographical introduction to this section of *Maqṣad* follows tradi-
tional form (cp., e. g., *Taḥbîr*, foll. 110v° f.), al-Ghazâlî's outline here of what it means
to say that God is *qâdir* seems to be modeled directly upon Avicenna's statement on the
same topic in '*Arshiyya* (p. 11) and to respond to it by emending it. It is, in any case,
against this background that it is to be interpreted. Avicenna's text reads:

That He is *Qâdir*: We have shown that He knows and that the act which pro-
ceeds from Him is in conformity with His knowledge and that His knowing the
order of the good (*niẓâmu l-khayr*) in such a way that He knows it to be the
manifest consequence (*âthâr*) of the perfection of His existence is His Will.
When you know this you will know that the one who has the power to act (*al-
qâdir*) is the one from whom the act proceeds in conformity with his will, that is,
who acts if he wills and if he does not will does not act. It does not follow from
this that His will and volition must vary so that at one time He wills and at
another does not, since volitions vary because of the variation of aims and we
have stated that He has no aim (*gharaḍ*).[152] Therefore, His will and volition is

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[151] Note that this statement is unqualified, while the following one, viz., that God has the power
(*qâdirun 'alâ*) to bring about the end of this world now, is qualified by the ensuing condition.
The second statement, thus, remains formally true, though, as we have seen, it is in fact not
possible that God have willed to create a world in any respect different from the one we know,
since to have done so would have been inconsistent with His liberality and His justice. For the
description of what it means to have the power to act, cp. the passage of *Iqtiṣâd* cited in n. 53
above.

[152] He has insisted earlier that God's providence (*al-'inâyah*) does not imply any «final cause»
('*Arshiyyah*, pp. 6, 21 ff. and 10, 23 ff.). Note that though this remark is not reflected in *Maq-*

one (*muttaḥidah*). Since this proposition is conditional, it does not follow from our statement "If He wills he acts and if He does not will He does not act" that it must be that He will and that He act and that He not will and that He not act, since He knows the order of the good in the ultimate and the most perfect way, so that His volition and His will does not change (*lā tataghayyar*).,

Avicenna – as does al-Ghazâlî in the parallel passage of *Maqṣad* – follows the traditional procedure of introducing the lexical definition of the expression as it is used ordinary speech and has then to state how this common understanding of the word must be qualified and nuanced if it is to be validly employed to describe God. The topic here is that of God's power and the problem Avicenna addresses is that of the relationship of that power to the will that activates it. He has already identified God's will with His knowledge and said that it «transcends alteration» (pp. 10f.). What he has to say in the section on God's power is directed primarily against the *mutakallimîn*, who hold that the world has existed for only a finite period of time and therefore that God did not will His action in creation to exist coëternally with Himself. In order to make his point Avicenna distinguishes God's attribute of will (*al-mashî'ah*), as corresponding by analogy to the faculty of human agents, from its act, the volition (*al-irâdah*) and argues that the two cannot be distinguished in God, since His will is its act and is one and coëternal with His essence, wherefore, by implication, His action too is eternal.[153] The same line of reasoning appears in *Ilâhiyyât*, though without drawing a distinction between will and volition. There, in discussing the notion of potency, he reviews the senses of the words '*quwwah*' and '*qudrah*' and defines the potency or power of an agent to act (p. 171, 2f.) as «that by which he may act or not act according as he wills and does not will» (*bi-ḥasabi l-mashî'ati wa-ʿadami l-mashî'ah*) and goes on to state that the power to act, so understood, does not entail «that by it the agent actually be acting, but rather, he has, by virtue of the power, the possibility of acting and the possibility of not acting». Having said this, he has then to deal with the *mutakallimîn*, i.e., with those who «think that such power belongs only to those to whom it belongs to act and to whom it belongs

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ṣad, p. 145, al-Ghazâlî elsewhere makes it quite explicitly, e. g., *Tahâfut*, p. 40 and *Iḥyâ'* 4, p. 93, cited above.

[153] The phrases 'His will and His volition must vary' and 'His will and His volition is one' (in both cases with singular verbs: *an takûna mashî'atuhû wa-irâdatuhû mukhtalifah* and *mashî'atuhû wa-irâdatuhû muttaḥidah*) seem curious at first. (In his translation, *ZDMG* 130 [1980], pp. 256f., Meyer, makes no comment on this, rendering both phrases with a plural verb; he renders '*mashî'ah*' by 'Wollen' and '*irâdah*' by 'Willen'.) For the theologians '*irâdah*' and '*mashî'ah*' are taken to be synonymous (cf., e. g., *Mujarrad*, p. 76, 8ff., *Tamhîd*, § 444, *Laṭâ'if* 1, p. 57, 12 and 3, p. 158 [*ad* 11.107], and *Iḥyâ'* 4, p. 248, 4ff.) and al-Bâqillânî uses the latter to define the former (*Sharḥ al-Irshâd*, fol. 78vᵒ, 19 and *Ghunya*, fol. 69rᵒ, 16ff.). They often occur alongside one another without distinction (e. g., *Mushkil*, pp. 99, 4-7 and p. 100, 18 and *Laṭâ'if* 3, p. 80 [*ad* 9.6]). In certain contexts, however, the one may have priority of usage and be preferred to the other, as there is a tendency, because of its use in Q 16.40 and 36.82, to employ '*arâda, yurîdu, irâdatan*' when referring to God's will as it bears directly upon His action, especially with regard to particular entities and events, but this does not imply a formal distinction between God's *irâdah* and His *mashî'ah*.

not to act so that if it belongs to something to which it belongs only to act, they don't
think it has *qudrah*; which is not true» (p. 172, 13-15). Paralleling the distinctions he
makes in speaking of God's will in *'Arshiyya*, he notes (pp. 172f.) that

> if this being which only acts acts without volition and will (*min ghayri an
> yashâ'a wa-yurîd*), then it has neither power nor potency in this sense. If, how-
> ever it acts by will and choice (*bi-irâdatin wa-khtiyâr*) save that it wills perpetu-
> ally, [either because] by existing constantly its will does not change or because
> it is impossible that it change because of an essential impossibility, then it does
> act through a power (*bi-qudrah*).[154]

The two cases Avicenna wants to account for here are (1) that of the souls of the celes-
tial spheres, which albeit essentially contingent beings, exist eternally and act voluntar-
ily in causing the eternally constant motion of their several spheres and (2) that of the
power and will of God, whose being is eternally necessary in every respect. He con-
cludes, then by driving home the logical distinction (p. 173, 11f.): «Since it is true that
when he wills he acts, it is also true that when he does not will he does not act and when
he does not act he does not will, but it does not follow from this that at any given time he
does not will; this is clear to anybody who knows logic».

   That God created the world at a finite time in the past is a consistent theme of al-
Ghazâlî against Avicenna and the *falâsifa* and the context at *Maqsad*, p. 145 requires
that he respond to Avicenna's interpretation of *'qâdir'* as predicated of God. What he
does in this passage of *Maqsad*, accordingly, is to begin with the common definition, as
does Avicenna, but then, employing the same logical argument, to reverse the qualifi-
cation of the concept that is presented in *'Arshiyya* in order to reject Avicenna's thesis
that God must eternally will to create eternally. That this is what he intends here would
seem to be confirmed by *Tahâfut* where, responding to an analogous paraphrase of the
same passage of *'Arshiyya*, he asserts (p. 375)[155] only the possibility of the world's
having had a temporal beginning and the possibility that the world as we know it come
to an end and be replaced by a different order of things and that the whole eventually
cease to exist altogether. Against Avicenna he says that the conditional «acts if he wills
and if he does not will does not act» does not imply that given the determination of the
will action must follow immediately and that God, therefore, since His will is eternal
necessarily acts eternally. Read in this way, al-Ghazâlî says nothing here that would

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[154] The text here is somewhat problematic, though the sense is clear enough. Plainly the *'wujûdani
ttifâqiyyan'* of p. 172, 1 has (1) to be a circumstantial (*hâl*) phrase for something, either for the
preceeding *'lâ yataghayyaru'* (omitting the following *wâw*) or for something that has been lost
and is (2) conjoined to the *'aw-yastahîlu ... dhâtiyyan'* phrase as an alternative. The sense of
the *'ittifâq'* here, then, is not the same as that of *Ilâhiyyât*, p. 415, which we saw earlier. Père
Anawati's rendering (*La Métaphysique du Shifâ', livres I à IV*, Paris, 1978, p. 217), "*fortuite*",
thus, is in error. Concerning the sense of *'ittifâqiyyan'* in the present context, cp. *'Arshiyya*,
p. 10, 5f.: «it must be the case that its action is either variable or constant» (... *an yakûna
fi'luhû mukhtalifan aw-muttafiqan*).
[155] The same passage of *'Arshiyya* is paraphrased also in *Maqâsid* 2, p. 85 (where read *min* for *wa-*
after *lâ budd* in line 19).

suggest or imply that it is possible that God will other than what He does will. The denial of the implication that God must inevitably will to act could, in principle, be taken to mean that it is not necessary that He will to create anything at all.[156] Such an assertion would, however, be inconsistent with the passages of *Iqtiṣâd* and *Iljâm* we have just examined and moreover is not needed in order to explain the presence of the denial. In *Tahâfut* (pp. 214f.) he insists, against the notion that God acts by his very nature (*bi-dhâtihî*), on the distinction between voluntary activity and natural activity and says that beings whose activity is of the latter kind cannot refrain from acting; «neither has the sun any power to refrain from giving light nor does fire to cease heating» and explicitly refuses the thesis that «the First being has no power to refrain from its acts». He does not assert here, however, that it is possible that God not act at all. Again, in *Mi'yâr*, al-Ghazâlî explains that the affirmation and denial of materially identical sentences does not entail a contradiction when one of the terms is equivocal and by illustration cites an example involving the description 'chooses', noting (p. 73, 1ff.) that «'chooses' is predicated in two different meanings and so is equivocal, as it is sometimes used to mean one who has the power not to act and is sometimes used to mean one who undertakes something because of his appetite and the arousal of a motivation within himself». It would seem almost certain, even though no such suggestion to this effect is made in the context, that al-Ghazâlî understands the first meaning as true of God and the second as true of human agents. And if this is so then the statement could be interpreted as asserting, even if in a very oblique manner, that God has the power not to create anything at all. Such an interpretation, however, would go well beyond the scant evidence offered by the text. That the distinction is based on and implies the principle that, unlike human agents, God cannot act to fulfill any need or to secure any advantage for Himself is clear from what al-Ghazâlî has to say in other places. It is likely, furthermore, that also behind the 'has the power not to act' (if the distinction presented here is meant to be that between God's choosing and human choosing) is the thesis that it is not necessary that God act eternally, a theme which al-Ghazâlî commonly reïterates against the *falâsifa* and the "logicians". We have no evidential grounds, however, to justify going any further. As formulated in the context the statement neither says nor implies anything about the relationship between power and will. Just as al-Ghazâlî's assertion that God has the power to cause the end of the world now does not necessarily imply that it is possible that He do so, so also his saying that God has the power not to act need not imply that it is possible that He not will the action He does will.

We may then summarise the evidence of these texts as follows. In the final chapter of *Mi'yâr* (p. 195) and *Iqtiṣâd* (p. 43,3), al-Ghazâlî says that God's being is necessary in its every aspect, but does not state how he may or may not limit or qualify the statement. In *al-Iqtiṣâd*, then, written not long after *Mi'yâr*, probably in 488/1095, he suggests (p. 78), albeit obliquely and somewhat ambiguously, that the act of God's will is necessary (*wâjib*). In view of his superb control and use of the Arabic language, the way the

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[156] As we have noted, the ensuing remark on God's having the power to end the world now has to do only with what is counterfactually possible. It is interesting to note that in contrast to his emendation of Avicenna's '*natîjatu l-'ilmi l-sâbiq*' mentioned above, he here states the counterfactual in terms not of the determination of God's will but of his eternal foreknowledge.

sentence is cast and its relation to the immediate context would be difficult to justify and explain if he did not mean to suggest that God wills necessarily to create what He creates. What is apparently hinted at in *Iqtiṣâd*, then, is made explicit in *Iljâm* (pp. 20 f.), which was completed at the very end of his life (505/1111): God's will to create this world is eternal and necessary in its act. In *al-Maqṣad*, however, which was written after 490/1097, he seems perhaps to imply (p. 145) that God does not necessarily will to create. Read, however, against the background of the conspicuously parallel passage of *Tahâfut* (p. 375), written some three years earlier, it would appear more probable that his intention is to deny only that God wills necessarily in such a way that the world needs must have existed from eternity and cannot cease to exist, without implying either that God does or does not will necessarily the temporal creation of the world. Al-Ghazâlî, as we have had several occasions to observe, is by no means hostile to ambivalence, but on the contrary employs it sometimes purposefully and with great skill so as to appear to the superficial reader to state a more traditional orthodoxy than in fact he holds. In the texts we examined earlier we have found al-Ghazâlî's teaching to be thoroughly consistent; ambivalent or vague as some of his statements may be or may at first appear to be, his formulations are regularly cast in such a way that theses and propositions that are asserted clearly and explicitly in one place are not denied in another place, whether in the same or in a different work.[157] The evidence would seem to indicate, therefore, that the passage of *al-Maqṣad* (p. 145) is correctly to be read as meaning to assert only the narrower thesis, since a broader interpretation would be inconsistent both with what he had suggested in *Iqtiṣâd* and with what he was later to say overtly in *Iljâm*. If this is so, then, when al-Ghazâlî says in *Iḥyâ'* 4, p. 249 that God's action, in contrast to those of human agents, is «pure choice», his intention is not that God's will is wholly indeterminate so that it is possible that He have created nothing at all or that creating He have created a universe different in any respect from the one He did create. What he means, rather, is that the act of God's will is not moved by appetite or need but by a perfect and absolute knowledge of what is best.[158] Choice, strictly speaking, is an intellectual judgement of what is best (*Iḥyâ'* 4, 248 f.) so that God's «pure choice» will be one that is totally free of any "motivation" arising from a need or desire to attain some benefit and is in no way "obligatory" (*wâjib*) in order to avoid some harm. This would seem to be most plausible reading of the text. It remains, however, an inference, since the texts offer no unambiguous explanation of what precisely is meant and implied when God's will is said to be necessary.

[157] One has to read carefully. In *Arba'în*, pp. 19 f. al-Ghazâlî says of God, «*aḥdatha l-khalqa iẓhâran li-qudratihî . . . lâ li-ftiqârin wa-lâ li-ḥâjatin wa-annahû mutafaḍḍilun bil-khalqi wal-ikhtirâ'i wal-taklîfi lâ 'an wujûbin wa-mutaṭawwilun bil-in'âm . . .*», where the '*mutafaḍḍil . . . lâ 'an wujûb*' might erroneously be taken to mean "gratuitously . . ., without any necessity" as denying that God creates necessarily what He creates, whereas in fact '*wujûb*' here means moral obligation; we saw earlier in analysing *Iqtiṣâd*, pp. 174 ff. what al-Ghazâlî means when he says that no action is "necessary" for God in the sense of being morally obligatory or incumbent Him.

[158] See *Iḥyâ'* 4, 248 f. and *Maqṣad* p. 87, discussed above, and cp. *Ilâhiyyât*, p. 366, 10 ff. (= *Najâh*, p. 250, 3 ff.) where it is said that God's will is unlike ours; since he can have no purpose (*gharaḍ*) «He wills *per se* (*li-dhâtihî*) this kind of pure intellectual volition» (*al-irâdatu l-'aqliyyatu l-maḥḍah*); cf. also *Mubâḥathât*, § 471 ff.

5. Summary: God of Abraham or God of the Philosophers?

Al-Ghazâlî, as we have seen, adopts as his own certain basic aspects of the Avicennian theology and cosmology while rejecting others. In his account of the lowest level of God's creating, that of the *Qadar*, he consistently asserts an uncompromising determinism according to which the activity of celestial beings is the cause of every sublunary event through the downward transmission of various effects from more universal through more particular causes in an ever more complex intermeshing of beings and occurrences. Determinism in the sense that no event, including the volitions and deliberate actions of men, takes place anywhere in the universe whose occurrence is not foreordained, willed, and originated by God conforms to traditional Ash'arite doctrine. That all sublunary events are caused by the operation of a host of secondary causes through the operation of the cosmic system in accord with an unalterable program built into the system at its creation and that it is impossible that God act save through the system is altogether contrary to the radical occasionalism of classical Ash'arite orthodoxy.

Although he takes the radical determinism of the cosmic system from Avicenna, al-Ghazâlî rejects the emanationism of al-Fârâbî and Avicenna. He rejects, that is, the thesis that the existence of the entities that make up the permanent components of every lower, and increasingly complex, order of being in the universal system issues by nature from the one next above it in the hierarchy of beings with the giver of forms/agent intellect at the bottom of the series of celestial intelligences. By implication, at least, the causes that are universal and permanent, both spiritual and material, which make up the universe, were willed individually as such, and originally created and ordered to one another by God directly. This bringing to existence of the cosmic apparatus al-Ghazâlî sometimes describes as God's "Accomplishment" (*al-qaḍâ'*). Though he alludes in a number of places to the perfection and order of this middle level of God's creative action, he nevertheless gives no detailed account of the structure and operation of the system in its major components. It may be that because he thought that knowledge of the celestial realm is not accessible to unaided reason (*Tahâfut*, p. 252), he made no attempt to describe its organisation in more specific detail. Against traditional Ash'arite teaching he locates the criterion and measure of the good in the achieved perfection of the instances of the essences according to the nature of each.

Finally, his treatment of the founding act of creation as such, the original "Determination" which is the act of God's knowledge and His will, though theologically the most important of the three levels of creation that al-Ghazâlî distinguishes, seems incomplete in some respects, not to say, unsatisfactory. It would seem clear that since God knows particular contingent entities, He wills the perfection of the universe and of every event that takes place in it individually and creates the universal and permanent causes ordering them to this end. By asserting that God knows and wills the perfection of the created universe in its every detail, al-Ghazâlî revises the sense of Avicenna's

statement that it cannot have happened «by coïncidence, but on the contrary requires that there be a given ordering» (see n. 92 above) so as to turn it against him. He says, on the other hand, that the act of God's will is eternal and necessary. The evidence of the texts make it plain enough that he holds that it is impossible that God will to create a universe in any respect different from the one He does will to create. Beyond this, however, al-Ghazâlî does not elaborate his thought on the question so as to make it unmistakably clear whether he understands God's will to be necessary in every respect or only in some qualified sense, nor does he set forth how he understands the relationship between God's will and His knowledge with sufficient clarity to cast much light on the problem. A brief review of how he deals with the possibles and their relation to God may help us to bring the problem into better focus and to see more clearly what al-Ghazâlî's position may be.

Al-Ghazâlî, as we have seen, devotes little attention to God's power as such. Where he does focus attention on it he speaks of it chiefly as an attribute which is characteristic of a being that acts through knowledge and volition, in order to deny, against Avicenna and al-Fârâbî, that the existence of the universe must necessarily proceed from the first cause eternally.

Thus in *Maqṣad* (p. 145) he uses the power to act as the defining characteristic of an agent who «if he wills acts and if he does not will does not act». Though rejecting there Avicenna's interpretation of the same definition, he does not discuss or consider God's power in itself and apart from His will. This has significant consequences for how he treats the possibles in relation to God and to His creating the world. Neither in this passage nor elsewhere does he cleanly separate the possibles and their status as they may be considered in relation to God's power in itself and as such from their status as they may be considered in relation to the determination of His will. The possibles for al-Ghazâlî are simply universals and so, when he replies to the thesis of Avicenna that the possibility of the existence of their instantiations has its being in already and eternally existent matter, he does not say, as would the earlier Ash'arites and the Basrian Mu'tazila, that it lies, absolutely speaking, in God's power to create, but says rather that the possibility of which Avicenna speaks is, in reality, nothing more than an abstract mental judgement (e.g., *Tahâfut*, p. 70). Consistently, then in *Iqtiṣâd* (p. 84) he says in effect that considered in themselves, as such and apart from their relation to God's will, the possibility of their contingent existence is merely a logical abstraction.[159] In sum, he

[159] One sees here one of the consequences and symptoms of al-Ghazâlî's rejection of the traditional analysis and the degree to which the conceptual framework of the *falsafa* dominates his thinking. That is, following the traditional vocabulary and analysis to say that something (generally a particular) is possible (*maqdûr*) is analytically to say that it is a [potential] object of God's power: '*maqdûrun li-llâh*' = '*Allâhu qâdirun 'alayhî*' = '*li-llâhi qudratun 'alayhî*' (where 'a power' becomes the subject term of the final analytic transform), and, by implication, then, that its existence is possible. '*Jâ'iz*' (concretely possible) as well as '*mumkin*' will be explained in terms of God's power to cause existence (e.g., *Ghunya*, foll. 91vº, 10ff. and 125vº, 23ff; cf. also, e.g., the discussion in *Shâmil* (69), pp. 375f.; note that prior to the time of al-Juwaynî '*mumkin*' is normally used of logical possibility, not ontological). Al-Ghazâlî, however, following Avicenna, begins from the abstract notion of the neutral relationship of the universal as such to the contingent existence or non-existence of its instantiations. As we noted earlier,

does not suggest that in relation to the absolute power of God their possibility is real even though indeterminate (a thesis that had been explicitly elaborated by the Muʿtazi-lite school of Baṣra). For al-Ghazâlî, the possibles as such are simply given as universals and the eventual existence of particular instantiations is eternally determined by God's will according to the requirements of his liberality and justice. As we have seen, this is what apparently he means when he says that «every possible is willed [by God]» (*Iqtiṣâd*, p. 107) and that «what is possible comes to be» (*Maqṣad*, p. 103). So too, he distinguishes God's knowledge from His will, describing the latter as an attribute whose function is to distinguish between alternative possibilities and to determine the realisa-tion of one rather than another. He does not, however, seem to have reflected seriously on the possibles as they may be separately considered in relation to God's knowledge as beings He knows He has the power to create but need not create. The act of God's will is contrasted to those of human agents as being one of «pure choosing», and choosing, strictly speaking, is an intellectual act. For al-Ghazâlî, however, that God's will may be distinguished from his power and His knowledge does not imply the indeterminacy of His will with regard to what He may choose to create. On the contrary, the act of God's will is determined by His wisdom, by His liberality and His knowledge. The possibles as such are given in God's eternal knowledge along with the knowledge of the one possible ordering of their existences that is best with respect to all others and His liberality and His justice require that creating He order them in precisely this order. If it is the func-tion of the will to distinguish and to select between equivalent alternatives (*Tahâfut*, p. 40 and *Iqtiṣâd*, p. 106) and between the initial creation and the day of judgement one possible universe – a unique ordering of instantiations of all the possible kinds of things – is best absolutely with respect to all others, then within the context of the whole there are no alternatives that are truly equivalent in all respects. The finality of the created universe, sc., the optimum good of created beings, is grounded not in God's goodness and wisdom but in the natures of the contingent essences that are given for Him as possible objects of His action. God chooses but has no choice. On the contrary, because of His liberality and justice He wills necessarily to create what has to be (*mâ yanbaghî*) «as it has to be and in the measure that has to be». In *Iljâm*, finally, al-Ghazâlî states without qualification that the act of God's will «is eternal and necessary», without hav-ing said anything either in *Iljâm* or elsewhere that would unambiguously indicate that 'necessary and eternal' is contextually meant to be understood in some qualified sense. Though the various assertions al-Ghazâlî makes in connection with God's will and the necessity of creation come easily together so as to present a consistent and well articu-lated doctrine, one has nevertheless a feeling that, for all the subtlety of his thought and the extraordinary eloquence of its exposition, and his pretentious certitude of the pro-fundity of his insight notwithstanding, al-Ghazâlî's theology, remains somehow incom-plete, at least as presented in his writings. Most conspicuous here certainly is his failure to raise the question of the ontological origin of the possibles as such and his failure to raise and to discuss explicitly the question of whether or not it is possible that God have chosen not to create anything at all. He could hardly have been unaware of these prob-

albeit he employs both '*mumkin*' and '*maqdûr*' for "possible" al-Ghazâlî hears the latter as altogether synonymous with the former as defined by Avicenna.

lems, given their explicit presence in the works of the *mutakallimîn* and occasions in his work where it would be appropriate to take up one or all of these problems are numerous enough. Did he avoid discussing them because his mind had become so taken up in the conceptual world of Avicenna and the *falâsifa* that he lost sight of basic theological issues and questions that were not raised for him there?[160] Or did he, rather, dodge these questions because to raise them explicitly and to respond to them plainly and adequately would have the inevitable effect of showing that the innovations that he was at pains to promote in sunnî theology were not, as he pretends in the beginning of *Maqṣad*, merely the substitution of a superior logic and conceptual system for an inferior one, but quite to the contrary involved far reaching compromises of traditional doctrine with the philosophy of Avicenna? Both doubtless played a role, conscious or unconscious.

In sum, then, it has long been recognized that while al-Ghazâlî rejected some major theses of the Avicennian system he appropriated others. What we have seen on a closer examination of what he has to say concerning God's relation to the cosmos as its creator, however, reveals that from a theological standpoint most of the theses which he rejected are relatively tame and inconsequential compared to some of those in which he follows the philosopher.

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[160] E. g., was his sense of the possibles as universals that are instantiated in the various species that make up the present world so dominant as to banish the earlier Ash'arite problematic from his mind and preclude his being able seriously to entertain the question of their ontolqgically needing an origin at all?

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